THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

Why the collapse of Fury-Usyk must trigger a dramatic rethink

MARCH 30 2023

THE WORLD'S BEST FIGHT MAGAZINE EST. 1909

BOXING NEWS

WWW.BOXINGNEWSONLINE.NET

HARLEM EUBANK

'Chris wasn't right ahead of Smith fight'

LAWRENCE OKOLIE

The verdict on cruiserweight's return

£4.25 VOL. 79 NO. 13

9 770006 851234 13

Plus

BENAVIDEZ PUMMELS PLANT

LEWIS VAN POETSCH

BALUTA WINS BARNSTORMER

ROBBIE DAVIES

RICHIE KATES

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

"I MUST DO BETTER"

Revitalised Joshua keen to take out his recent disappointments on Franklin

VISIT…

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

WASSERMAN
BOXING

LIVE ON
5

EUBANK VS URUZQUIETA

FRIDAY 31ST MARCH
YORK HALL, LONDON

numan Ladbrokes infinitum

BOXING NEWS

Contents

March 30, 2023

22

ANTHONY JOSHUA ON:
That outburst, the losses to Usyk, new trainer Derrick James, and the road ahead

DON'T MISS

» 4 **LESSONS FROM FURY-USYK**
The straw that broke the camel's back

» 5 **JERMAINE FRANKLIN**
Why he's so confident of beating AJ

» 16 **RICHIE KATES**
Tris Dixon provides a fitting tribute to a terrific fighter and truly wonderful man

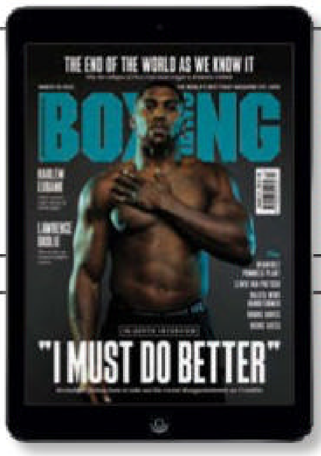
» 20 **BIG-FIGHT PREVIEW**
Is this really make or break for Joshua?

» 26 **HARLEM EUBANK**
On the death of his cousin, and Chris' loss

32

SUBSCRIBE: £13 FOR 13 ISSUES!
Visit SHOP.KELSEY.CO.UK/BXN1323

BOXING NEWS
Available on the App Store
Available on Android



BEST OF THE REST

» 7 **WHO WAS TO BLAME?**
Fighters and writers on the Fury fallout

» 8 **BUNCE DIARIES**
Derrick James can follow in big footsteps

» 10 **JORDAN v HEARN**
Was the interview worth listening to?

» 14 **ROBBIE DAVIES JNR**
The inside story of the freak injury

» 28 **LAWRENCE OKOLIE**
When Light was at the end of the tunnel

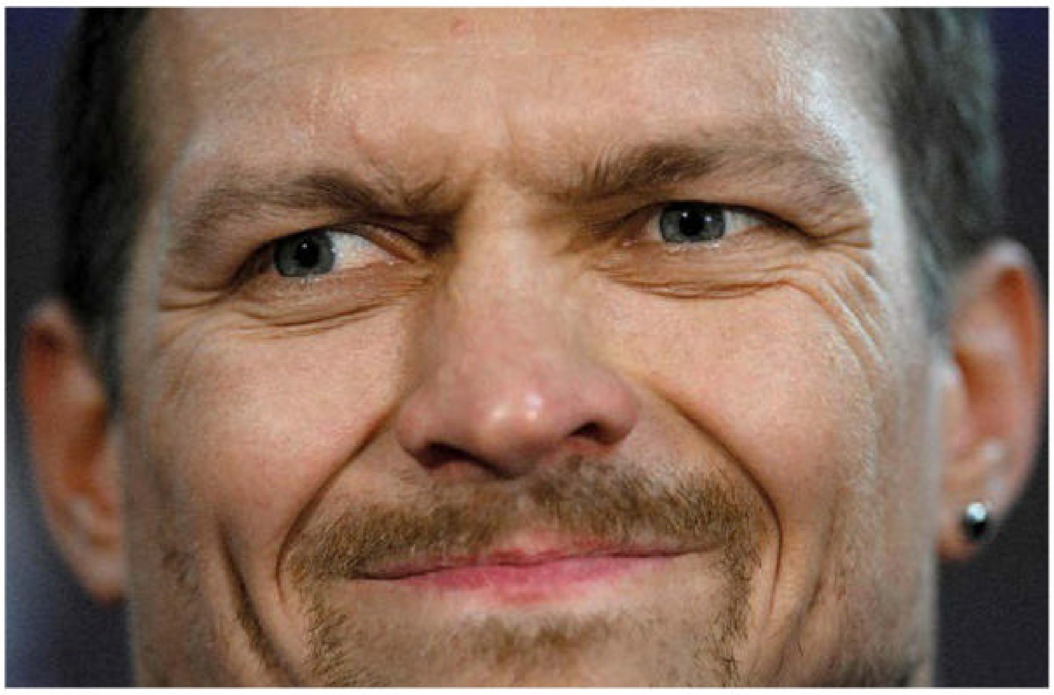
» 30 **AN EPIC BATTLE!**
Baluta and Cain serve up a violent classic

» 32 **BENAVIDEZ DELIVERS**
Plant does well to hear the final bell

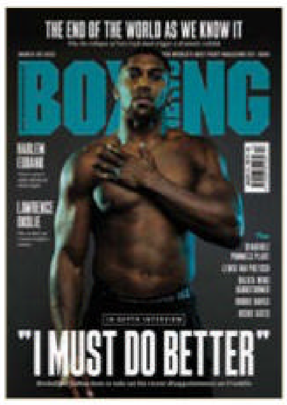
» 36 **POOCHI'S FAREWELL**
Van Poetsch retires after 170th contest

» 44 **FIGHTER TURNED WRITER**
The incredible story of Bob Hartley

Photo: PATRICIA DE MELO MOREIRA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: Usyk pulled the plug after growing tired of negotiating



Cover photography
MARK ROBINSON/MATCHROOM

THE BITTER (& PREDICTABLE) END

Fury and Usyk failed to agree terms on a rematch that might not even have been necessary

Matt Christie
@MattCBoxingNews
Editor

IT WOULD be nice to write about something other than the failure of Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk to agree terms, but, having followed the saga closely in recent weeks, it seems only right to report on the bitter (and somewhat predictable) end.

Where the blame lies is perhaps irrelevant and frankly difficult to decipher when reporters are not privy to every moment of negotiations, irrespective of how good they claim their access to be. The only information we have is what has been relayed by representatives of each boxer. And if the two boxers couldn't agree to fight, it was always unlikely they would then agree on who was at fault. 'Yep, hands up,' Fury would never say, 'I should have just let him have 50/50 in the first place.'

What we do know is that on Sunday March 19, when Frank Warren's twitter account suggested a positive announcement was nigh, both parties felt that significant progress had been made to the point the contest was all but set for April 29 at Wembley Stadium. Production crews were in place, the order of ring walks had been resolved – Fury was to walk last on the condition he didn't leave Usyk waiting around – and the rematch clause was in the contracts.

But that final point was where everything came crashing down. *If* Usyk won, and *if* the fight was again set for the UK, he wanted a 70/30 split in his favour while Fury was asking for 50/50. Neither would budge. As we went to press last week, we were told there were, at most, two days left for that last little detail to be resolved. On Wednesday March 22, after waking up to an email from Team Usyk stating they were pulling out of negotiations, Queensberry Promotions made a last-ditch attempt to salvage the unsalvageable. At approximately 7pm, *Boxing News* received a call to confirm the contest was officially off.

As we had suggested would happen, both parties then blamed only the other side. Team Usyk, who had agreed to take 30 per cent of the purse from the first contest, suggested they had been met with obstacle after obstacle throughout the process. It's doubtful that Fury's social media posts, where he taunted the opposition for how they'd been 'played' when agreeing to that aforementioned 30 per cent, assisted the process. Team Fury, meanwhile, took a swipe at the Ukrainian, suggesting his desire for a 70/30 split in the rematch was unrealistic, particularly in Fury's homeland where the 'undisputed' title would not be at stake (at least two of the four sanctioning bodies had stated they would not stick around for a rematch, so titles would be declared vacant).

Both fighters were ultimately governed by money. That, to a degree, is understandable. Both are nearing the end of their careers and it's feasible that a rematch could have been the last contest for each and therefore their final retirement payout. However, what is harder to accept is the system – or lack of – that allows the boxers, and only the boxers, to call the shots. And when two multi-millionaires are squabbling over more millions, when giving ground or making concessions might be perceived as being weak, it's always going to be difficult to get any kind of agreement in place.

Both boxers are to blame. But when they operate in a sport that only invites, but never demands, the best to fight the best, then it's little wonder these mega-fights are so agonisingly rare, particularly in the heavyweight division where earnings are eye-wateringly high, even for substandard title bouts.

Surely it's time for the rematch clause to be removed from negotiations altogether. Can we not go back to simpler times when we waited to see if a rematch was necessary before even mentioning it? In recent years, due to rematches being scheduled, obliged, or not agreed, the following 'undisputed' fights could not occur: Deontay Wilder-Anthony Joshua; Fury-Joshua; Wilder-Andy Ruiz Jnr and, of course, Fury-Usyk.

Which brings us to that infuriating notion of undisputed. Why does the sport continue to collectively label the coming together of four belts as the holy grail when in reality it only screams our shortcomings to the world? Shouting that this is the first time in the 'four-belt era' that all four belts have been at stake is not an achievement, it's a joke. If we didn't have four belts, there would be substantially less wiggle room at the negotiating table and more clarity on who deserved the champion's share. There is a strikingly obvious correlation between the 'four-belt era' and the amount of best versus best matchups falling out of bed. Yes, I know this is how the boxing business 'works', but that doesn't mean we should be too scared to instigate change now it's abundantly clear it doesn't work at all.

Time to subscribe

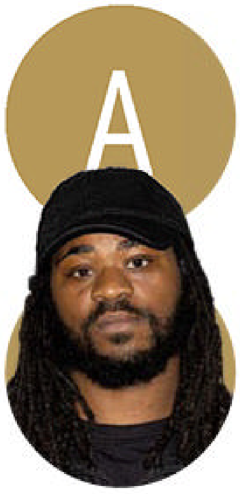
- **THERE are numerous ways to subscribe, including special offers.**
- **YOU can get a print and online subscription for the bargain price of £13 for 13 issues, then just £9.99 per month thereafter.**
- **FOR more information on all the subscriptions plus our special bookazines, please visit www.shop.kelsey.co.uk or call 01959-543-747.**
- **THE next issue will be in shops on April 6 and available to download on April 5.**

The Opening Bell...

- **THE *BN* podcast has been described as the 'most impartial and informative podcast around.'**
- **WE EXAMINE the upcoming Joshua comeback and give our final verdict on the Fury-Usyk collapse.**
- **Listen (for free) via Apple, Spotify and all major platforms.**
- **NEW episode available to download (for free) every Thursday.**

'JOSHUA CAN'T BREAK MY HEART'

I have changed my life for the better, we are ready for anything this weekend, including the very best of 'AJ'



Jermaine Franklin

Heavyweight contender

AFTER the Dillian Whyte fight I started a health journey, so I'm in way better shape for Anthony Joshua. I stopped eating red meat, and started eating fruit, and I lost eight pounds before my camp started.

I wanted to be in better health. We've got some stuff that runs in the family – diabetes; high blood pressure; heart disease – and I don't want to be just another guy with the same problems, so I've been making healthy changes.

At first, I was craving beef like crazy, but now it really doesn't bother me at all. I eat a lot of salads, salmon and chicken, and I started drinking juices. Now I get full so fast – it's crazy.

It's hard to try to change your life around in the middle of a camp when you're used to everything and you're doing too much to your body at one time. I thought it would be better to do it while I wasn't working out, and before I got back in the gym.

I'm more in shape, faster, and can get around easier than I could before. It hasn't changed my style, but it's improved it.

I still think I outpointed Whyte seven rounds to five – Compubox had me eight to four – but that's boxing. I'm not going to cry about it or complain about it. You just take the next thing.

From what I've been hearing Joshua's going to knock me out in five rounds. I think he's going to come out and try and be aggressive, and we're ready for that. We're ready for him trying to box, and ready for anything he can actually try to do.

I can't speak about whether he's damaged – I don't know him that well. But I'm a competitor. In my head he's training hard, and coming back for his name and to reclaim his status.

He lets his right hand go at the right times. A lot of the fights I've watched he throws decent flurries, but he's got a nice right hand – he causes a lot of damage and his opponents start to get worried. But I've got a chin – you can't break my will or take my heart. You'd have to kill me.

Photo: MARK ROBINSON/MATCHROOM

HUGE UNDERDOG: But Franklin fancies his chances of scoring the big upset

Everybody says if AJ loses to me his career's over, but I don't look at it that way. That's insulting to me as a fighter. I still look at him as if he's a world champion and holding three belts.

Boxing is the only sport where we write people off for a couple of losses. We don't write a basketball team off when they've been in a slump, but in boxing, when you lose your throne – if you're not at the top it's like you're at the bottom. He still has a chance to come back.

Derrick James is a great coach – he's got world champions – but it takes time for a healthy relationship to develop. I could teach you some things in a short amount of time, but I still don't know you inside-out – your weaknesses, your strengths or your flaws. It's good for your coaches to know that, because they know the right things to say to you. It's a little deeper than the training aspect of the relationship you have with your trainer.

It takes at least a couple of years. If you're not that close anyway, you only see each other when you go to the gym. That's a couple of hours out of the day. Most fighters probably only work out four times a week, so seeing a guy eight hours a week and expecting him to know you – it's not really going to work like that.

Oleksandr Usyk and Tyson Fury are the world's top two heavyweights. Joshua could still be third, but after back-to-back losses, Deontay Wilder could be third. But in the same breath that's still hard – it's a tie between them and Andy Ruiz Jnr.

A lot of people sleep on Usyk and his skills. He's very skilful. But I trained a little bit with Tyson before the Whyte fight – he doesn't rush a lot but he has great timing, and a couple of tricks of the trade that throw you off your game. Usyk has great footwork – he throws a lot of punches and he's super busy. It would have been a great fight, but as long as Fury could have kept his distance and kept the jab working he could have pulled it off.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

KEEP NEGOTIATIONS PRIVATE

IT is getting ridculous now. So after another long and winding tease on social media between the best two fighters in their divsion, the best two fighters in their division can't agree terms. Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk should be ashamed.

It might be tempting to blame promoters or even single one team out. But from where I'm sitting, this comes down to the boxers. If they both wanted the fight, it would have happened.

I do understand that negotiations are complicated but here's an idea: Do not parade boxers together until the fight is signed. Do not air your dirty laundry in public. Ever since Usyk confronted Fury in December we have been promised a contest would follow. All those four months have done is heighten the interest and now the disappointment. YET AGAIN.

Jonathan Miller

THE FANS ARE GROWING RESTLESS

BOXING never fails to miss an opportunity....to miss an opportunity. So, it is once again, that with the abject failure to get Tyson Fury v Oleksandr Usyk sorted out, another mammoth failure is delivered to the fans. But of course who cares about them? Those at the very top of the business of boxing probably don't care, but they really should do.

The public aren't that stupid, we've all had enough of the pointless fights that promotors keep rolling out. What should have been a golden opportunity, not only for the sport but for the boxers as well as the wider public, is lost.

David Doe

IS GGG v MARTINEZ COMING SOON?

I HAVE just watched a fight between Sergio Martinez and Jhon Terehan in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Martinez won by stoppage in the first half of the opening round in a mismatch. It was a fight where Terehan was clearly chosen to lose, in what was something of a homecoming for Martinez.

Despite the level of opposition, I have to say that physically, 48-year-old Martinez looked as good as he has ever done. During the post-fight interview at ringside Martinez's high ranking with the WBA was discussed and a possible future fight was mentioned. Do *not* be surprised if we see Sergio Martinez vs Gennadiy Golovkin (GGG) before the end of the year. The combined age of the fighters will be just shy of 90 years.

Chris Strange

WASH YOUR MOUTH OUT

TYSON FURY should stay off social media for the forseeable future. His foul mouth is a terrible advert for the sport. Particularly from a man who used to preach about mental health.

Carla Stanley

KNOCK 'EM OUT
onto FRESH CANVAS
Producing over 15 canvases a week
join the masses & get yours today
EX-TV SHOW CANVASES ALSO AVAILABLE
Available signwritten or plain
Ringcraft
BOXING FACILITIES
Order Today:
ringcraftboxing@gmail.com

GREAT CONDITION: But that doesn't mean Martinez deserves a title shot

THE PANEL

WHO WAS TO BLAME FOR TYSON FURY vs OLEKSANDR USYK FALLING APART?

Wayne Alexander
(Former European champ)

It looks to me like both parties are partly to blame. They are both undefeated champions and the fight should have been a 50-50 split with no rematch clause at all, in my opinion. Only the fans will lose out at the end of the day.

Jordan Gill
(Former European champ)

I think it's clear that Fury is to blame. Usyk is a throwback fighter who goes to a champion's back yard and beats them, no questions asked. I think Usyk called Tyson's bluff accepting 30 per cent and now Fury is looking for other excuses. Usually if two fighters want the fight, it happens.

Marcus Morrison
(Middleweight contender)

I put it down to the split of the money. I completely agree that Tyson's the A side, but at the same time, Usyk holds the belts, so I think a 60/40 split to Tyson would have been fair. Forget the rematch clause, the best fight the best, and both make a load of money in doing so. If only the boxing business was that simple.

Declan Warrington
(Sports journalist)

Fury. Which he'll know, because underneath it all he's got integrity. But this isn't him running scared – he'll also know he's got the beating of Usyk. When everything settles I suspect he'll recognise how essential the fight is, and that that will get the ball rolling again.

HOW DO YOU SEE ANTHONY JOSHUA VS JERMAINE FRANKLIN PLAYING OUT THIS SATURDAY?

Wayne Alexander

Franklin will be confident and in fighting shape. As for Joshua, he is coming off back-to-back defeats and has changed trainers again, so no one is quite sure how his mind will be. I do feel Joshua is still hungry enough. His extra size, strength and boxing ability will see him beat Franklin on points.

Jordan Gill

I think it's a great fight. Franklin pushed Dillian Whyte to the final bell in a close fight, so seeing how AJ deals with him will be interesting. Back-to-back defeats to Usyk and a change in training team are unknowns. I expect to see a refreshed and aggressive AJ take Franklin out in the middle rounds.

Marcus Morrison

I can't see anything other than an early KO for Joshua. He's got a point to prove, and he's got to win in good fashion. I don't see Franklin bringing anything to the table that will trouble Joshua.

Declan Warrington

In a mostly convincing victory for Joshua, which will show he has got plenty left – physically at least. Not only is there no shame in losing to Usyk, he also performed really well in their rematch, which got overlooked after he did what he did in the ring, post-fight.

10 COUNT

INCOMPATIBLE

10 all-British matchups that unfortunately got away

1 RICKY HATTON VS. JUNIOR WITTER
Chalk and cheese, both in terms of personality and fighting style, Hatton and Witter teased British boxing fans for years only to never actually meet in the ring.

2 TYSON FURY VS. ANTHONY JOSHUA
While there is still hope these two will one day come to their senses and do the right thing, for now Fury vs. Joshua remains something of a pipe dream. It also feels as though the best time for it to happen may now have passed.

3 AMIR KHAN VS. KELL BROOK
Khan and Brook did of course finally get together in February 2022, with Brook winning via sixth-round stoppage, but that, if we're honest, never felt like the real thing. Both were past their best by then.

4 JOE CALZAGHE VS. CARL FROCH
One of the great mythical matchups, a super-middleweight fight between Calzaghe and Froch was never really a realistic proposition given how their careers played out, but had Calzaghe continued fighting beyond 2008, there's no doubt Froch would have chased him even harder.

5 TYSON FURY VS. DAVID HAYE
Scheduled to take place twice, first in 2012 and then in 2013, Haye withdrew from both due to a reported injury. Worth noting, too, that Fury was not a fraction of the heavyweight he would one day become.

6 CHRIS EUBANK VS. HEROL GRAHAM
Often avoided, Graham would have liked a chance against Eubank and Nigel Benn, both of whom stole nearly all the limelight throughout the nineties.

7 JOHNNY NELSON VS. ENZO MACCARINELLI
A classic case of "one on the way out and one on the way up", this 2006 cruiserweight fight between Nelson and Maccarinelli would have been intriguing to say the least. However, Nelson's ageing body ultimately let him down and the fight had to be scrapped.

8 CARL FROCH VS. JAMES DEGALE
Much like when Froch found himself arriving too soon to entice Calzaghe, DeGale experienced something similar when he became mandatory challenger for Froch at the tail end of Froch's career.

9 DARREN BARKER VS. MATTHEW MACKLIN
There were far too many British middleweights who avoided one another around the time of Barker and Macklin, but these two, in particular, should have settled their differences.

10 RICHARD WILLIAMS VS. WAYNE ALEXANDER
After a brilliant amateur battle in 1995, Williams and Alexander should have also fought as pros, especially when both were riding high at the same time. The ultimate boxer vs. puncher fight should have happened between 2001 and 2004.

Photo: MARK ROBINSON/MATCHROOM

matchroom.
DERRICK JAMES

MAGIC FROM THE CORNER

THE RIGHT STUFF: James appears to have the qualities of great trainers of the past

MR MOTIVATOR: Dundee could light a fire under his boxers

Steve Bunce
@BigDaddyBunce
Voice of boxing

IT IS entertaining to think what would have happened if Anthony Joshua had to pick from Angelo Dundee, Lou Duva, Eddie Futch or Richie Giachetti.

Joshua picked Robert Garcia last summer and Derrick James for this spring, but what if the ancient quartet were still operating, still growling, still teaching fighters the way of the ring?

'AJ' would have loved Futch, no doubt about that. Duva would have inspired him. Giachetti would have pushed him. Dundee would have talked his ears off. The four would have all seen the raw talent, all tried to polish the edges. They would have gone in search of better jabs, more head movement, a bigger right hand, a smarter head. They would have all believed in the Big Lad.

"My guy," Dundee would have famously uttered. Futch would have been reserved in praise, picking carefully his words of wisdom to fit the product. Duva would have backed his man to take down King Kong. Giachetti, known in his FBI files simply as The Torch, would have stood shoulder-to-shoulder and issued challenges. They were men, who in subtlety different ways, went to the trenches with their fighters. They came out swinging in defence of their men. Duva and Giachetti did trade blows with people in the ring and outside the ring. Dundee was always screaming at injustices and Futch was smarter in his ways at pushing and defending his man.

All four would have changed the Usyk fights. I firmly believe that. Perhaps James would have changed the Usyk flights. Perhaps. I know that the activity, advice and urgency in the corner at the end of a bad round, would have been worth the price of the admission. Several versions of "you're blowin' it, son" seem to fit the bill.

Futch would have got real close, his words muffled by the tiny distance between his mouth and Joshua's ear. It's the gap where harsh truths remain forever. Joshua would have listened and known Eddie Futch was telling him the truth.

Dundee would have talked and then glanced across the ring. He would have reminded Joshua of all the work and their talks and dreams. He would found that nerve to tickle. Joshua would have been up early, bouncing, looking at Usyk and Dundee would have still been talking.

Can Derrick James follow in the footsteps of great trainers like Futch, Dundee, Duva and Giachetti?

In the Saudi Arabian rematch with Usyk, Joshua sits in a high stall in his lonely corner, his arms draped along the ropes until the bell sounds. It is unusual; Usyk is up, bouncing, nodding at the last words from his corner for five or six seconds before the bell sounds. That sends a message; it lets everybody know that Usyk is ready, Joshua is not.

Both Giachetti and Duva would have fallen, sprawled, jumped through the ropes at the end of a tough round. They like to meet their boxers; the talking starts then. Both would have told Joshua that he was not hurt. Both would have told him that. Their fighters were indestructible beasts in the ring. Manny Steward was the same. "This son of a bitch can't hurt you. Now get the f**k out there and knock this mother f**ker out!" Who is going to argue with sensible reasoning like that? It's a chorus of belief from men that understand the cruel game. They were all masters of the 60-second salvation, they could all change and save a fight in that crucial and shrinking time slot.

All the best fighters - and some of the bad ones - have a tale about a man in a corner saving their career, lifting them, inspiring them, insulting them. It happens at all levels, not just in front of 90,000 with the heavyweight world title as the prize.

Dean Powell saved Derek Chisora one night in Birmingham in a British title fight against Sam Sexton: Del Boy was throwing it away, Deano used his sharp elbows to get in Del's face and read him the riot act; Sexton was beaten two rounds later.

Dundee would have got inside Joshua's head. Sweet Angelo would have found the triggers inside the boxer's mind. He would have also, away from the glare, worked on a bit more fluidity. Dundee was the king of the corner crisis, but he also had a deep understanding of the heart and mind of his fighters. Joshua needs that, it's not a secret.

Can you imagine Duva screaming away, looking at the referee, the opposite corner, his fighter and the commissioner at ringside? Duva spitting venom like he was talking to a 19-stone pit bull. That would have shaken Usyk! I have those images of Giachetti and Larry Holmes talking, exchanging words and opinions during the fight's break between rounds. That is a deep trust that you can't buy; Joshua would have loved that devotion.

And, Eddie Futch would have walked Joshua through the hell, holding his head in his hands if it was real tough and explaining the way out of the struggle. He would have told AJ not to panic. It would have worked with wise and simple words.

"You see, with fighters you gotta praise them," Giachetti said. "I tell them that if they listen, if they pay attention and if we work as a team, we'll become big together." All fighters great and small have to be able to listen, The Torch is right.

"I'm home," Joshua told me when I asked him what it would be like walking out at the O2 on Saturday. Welcome home, just make the most of the night and the words of advice; James might just be part of a long tradition of good men working the corners like the art it should be.

The very best men in the corner can deliver magic and how do you fight magic?

Photo: WARREN LITTLE/GETTY IMAGES

BLAME GAME: Fury is being blamed by Usyk for the collapse of their fight and vice versa

QUESTION TIME

Don't ask the boxers or promoters why Fury-Usyk won't be happening, ask if there is any point at all in hoping these kinds of fights ever actually get made, writes **George Gigney**

WEBSITES

TYSON FURY will not be fighting Oleksandr Usyk next - that is official. Steve Kim was one of the first to break the news that Usyk's team had walked away from the negotiations due to disagreements over a rematch clause. Alex Krassyuk, Usyk's promoter, joined Frank Warren on talkSPORT at one point and despite the pair agreeing to give negotiations one final go, they still couldn't get the fight over the line.

There were countless interviews across a huge range of outlets with various people involved in the negotiations - to the point where you would need to sacrifice a serious chunk of your spare time to just keep up to date with it all. Of course, most people won't do that and so they'll only get part of the story.

And, in reality, the story doesn't matter. Not many people will care about the percentage splits of rematch purses that couldn't be agreed upon, or the pointless deadlines thrown in by sanctioning bodies. All that matters is that the fight isn't happening.

All we've got instead are the likes of Warren and Krassyuk putting the blame on the opposing side. It's sad to see. Nobody involved walks away from this with their reputation enhanced, and they've only themselves to blame. Firstly, because they couldn't get the fight made but secondly because they couldn't help but air so many of the details of these negotiations in public, whether it was on social media via Fury and Usyk themselves or through the various other interviews that were conducted throughout the process.

Given the importance of the aborted fight, we now have to endure soundbites from pretty much everyone within boxing as they'll inevitably be asked about it, whether it's Eddie Hearn saying "I told you so" or Tim Bradley laying the blame solely at Fury's feet in an interview with ESPN.

It will be interesting to see how many boxing and sport outlets look at the bigger picture in the fallout of yet another boxing failure. Instead of just focusing on the individuals involved in this circumstance, it's worth scrutinising the systems – or lack thereof – in place that make it so easy for superfights like this one to simply never happen. It's easy to fire questions at those involved or to seek the opinion of other prominent names, but the harder question we should all be asking is: if the best won't fight the best, what's the point in the sport?

This weekend Anthony Joshua looks to build himself back up after consecutive

losses to Usyk when he faces American Jermaine Franklin. Prior to fight week there's not been much press about the fight, which seems a conscious choice from Joshua's side. One bit of news we did get though, courtesy of the Mail Online, is that Franklin has filed a lawsuit against Salita Promotions.

It's not the best way to enter the fight week of the biggest contest of your life. The suit is, unsurprisingly, centred around money and contractual disputes. It puts Franklin at even more of a disadvantage going into this fight with Joshua, as it's a distraction he just doesn't need at this point.

YOUTUBE

After his 170th and final fight, ID Boxing released a short film about legendary British journeyman Lewis van Poetsch, directed by Jamie Yuan. It's about 10 minutes long and thoroughly enjoyable. It's almost impossible to dislike van Poetsch and this documentary shows why: he's incredibly self-aware and has an almost unwaveringly positive outlook on boxing, despite the fact he lost most times he entered the ring.

What's fascinating about documentaries like this and others that have come before it are the insights it gives into the skill it takes to be a successful journeyman. The film was made prior to Van Poetsch's 150th fight, so it's more an examination of his role as journeyman rather than a retrospective on his career.

It takes an underappreciated level of skill to fight so regularly while minimising damage but also not just getting dominated in every outing. Prior to Tommy Fury's fight against Jake Paul a few weeks ago there was a lot of talk about Fury's level of opposition heading into the bout. His opponents, with their losing records, were unfairly dubbed "taxi drivers" and dismissed as having no skill whatsoever. Even in this short 10-minute film that notion is debunked - journeymen provide an essential service and it's not something just anyone can do.

BROADCASTS

Lawrence Okolie's move to Sky Sports and BOXXER came with its fair share of attention and discourse, including barbs being traded in the media between Okolie and Hearn, his former promoter. The new partnership with Sky kicked off this past weekend with Okolie's pedestrian win over David Light in Manchester. It certainly wasn't the performance Okolie nor Sky were hoping for, but a win is a win. And credit to Sky for not trying to dress up what was a lacklustre main event.

Unfortunately, UK fans missed out on being able to watch David Benavidez' win over Caleb Plant in the US as it wasn't picked up by a single broadcaster. This isn't the first time a significant international card has fallen through the cracks and it sadly won't be the last.

Listeners of talkSPORT will also have been treated to a heated conversation between Hearn and presenter Simon Jordan, who had previously "challenged" the promoter to come onto his show and answer his questions. Jordan doesn't shy away from making his opinions known and he does sometimes raise some interesting points about boxing, but he also often comes across as overly combative. There was an element of this chat that seemed as though it was looking for some sort of 'gotcha' moment to catch Hearn out. Ultimately there wasn't much substance to it and you would have been better off tuning in to Hearn's appearance on Capital FM, which was a lot funnier.

BOXING ON THE BOX

MARCH 31
HARLEM EUBANK-CHRISTIAN URUZQUIETA
Channel 5
Coverage begins at 10pm

APRIL 1
ANTHONY JOSHUA-JERMAINE FRANKLIN
DAZN
Coverage begins at 7pm

APRIL 2
ROBEISY RAMIREZ-ISAAC DOGBOE
Sky Sports Action
Coverage begins at 1am

Photo: BEN HOSKINS/GETTY IMAGES

LONSDALE
LONSDALE

APPRECIATED: Van Poetsch said goodbye at the weekend

Unsubscribed

Okolie and Buatsi weren't "appy" with the way the game had changed

EXPOSURE: Something Buatsi suggested DAZN can't grant him enough of

Photo: RICHARD HEATHCOTE/ GETTY IMAGES

Elliot Worsell
@ElliotWorsell
Online Editor

WHEN DAZN arrived in the UK in December 2020 they carried with them the slogan "Game. Changed" which, if you could get past the awkward placing of the full stop, seemed to imply they would be the ones to change the game by essentially updating it for a new, more tech-savvy audience.

However, that, almost two and a half years on, has not been the case. In fact, while it was not incorrect for them to predict the game would change, to suggest they, DAZN, would have anything to do with this change was a suggestion both arrogant and audacious in the extreme.

That's not to say DAZN's influence on boxing hasn't been a significant one. It has. But every change witnessed in the boxing game in the past two years has been a change brought upon by its own insecurities, its own weaknesses, and its own desperation to fit in. Which is to say, whether DAZN existed or not, it would be incredibly difficult for boxing to appear in the current climate the way it did 10 or even five years ago. Simply put, the game has changed because the *world* has changed.

Now, to fully follow boxing, you must be online and hooked up to some sort of device on a 24/7 basis. Now, to get ahead in the sport as a boxer, you must rely not on a promoter to do your selling but on yourself. Your own social media presence. Your own ability to project your voice. Your own ability to lie.

That these changes have come about has nothing to do with DAZN and their plan to change the game. Instead, it is all merely a side-effect of where we find ourselves in 2023. In other words, just as DAZN are not as important or game-changing as they would have wanted you to believe, nor are they as bad as their critics will tell you on their way out the exit door.

Last week, it was the turn of Joshua Buatsi to deliver a parting shot. He said, having left DAZN to sign with Sky Sports, "I want people to say, 'We know what channel to turn to. I'm not going to tell you to download an app and type in your email. My last fight, I asked myself, 'How many watched it?' I don't think a lot of people saw it. For the blood and sweat I shed it is important to me that people have access to watch it."

If Buatsi's issue is visibility, that's a fair enough gripe. Certainly, based on my own experience, there is still a whole world out there – those from an older generation – who believe the only boxing to be taking place each weekend is the boxing available to watch on Sky Sports or other channels accessible via a television remote. These people do not know about boxing via apps, nor, even if told such a thing exists, do they have the energy or simply the wherewithal to cross that bridge.

BITTER SPLIT: Okolie found himself on the sidelines for 13 months

This, for someone like Buatsi, must have been a concern. After all, as well as the prospect of all his future fights being shown exclusively on an app, Buatsi will probably, deep down, accept that he's not the sort of fighter to put himself out there or act as a makeshift promoter. That, he might argue, was the job of Eddie Hearn, the promoter he recently left. Eddie Hearn, meanwhile, might argue that Buatsi's unwillingness to change with the game – or, put another way, *play* the game – was ultimately the very thing that saw him slide down the pecking order.

From a promoter's point of view, too, that's quite understandable. Because Buatsi, while a talented fighter and 2016 Olympic bronze medallist, has so far failed to really ignite as a pro. He has no fanbase to speak of, as reflected in ticket sales, and he has failed to capture the public's imagination on Sky Sports (the channel on which the majority of his fights have been televised). That could be due to how he has been promoted, of course, or it could instead be a combination of uninspired matchmaking, vanilla soundbites, and periods of inactivity, which, combined, have made him an easy fighter to forget, both for promoters and fans alike.

Whatever it is, for him to have any chance, one suspects Buatsi is better placed at Sky Sports, where there is presumably less work for him to do and less of a drive to change the game. Moreover, to prevent the same stick again being used to beat them, DAZN have since made themselves available as a television channel (429 on Sky) for those less au fait with the idea of being chronically online.

Lawrence Okolie, by the way, is another boxer who made the same move as Buatsi. He too liked the idea of being a big fish in a smaller pond, where at least he would be seen and fed and appreciated. That led him to Boxxer and Sky Sports.

"You have a choice as a fighter to go where you are celebrated, or go to where you're tolerated, and I felt like I was being tolerated at my last place," Okolie told talkSPORT. "And I could be celebrated here depending on how I get on in terms of wins and then we go from there."

As with Buatsi, Hearn had been Okolie's promoter since the start of the 29-year-old's pro career back in 2017. He had, during those six years, given Okolie various platforms on which to shine (big undercards and main event slots) and had also had to watch Okolie more than once flatter to deceive when the lights were turned on. It was perhaps in those moments, rather than when stopping Krzysztof Glowacki to take the WBO cruiserweight belt, or stopping Yves Ngabu to win the European title, Hearn got a sense of Okolie's ceiling – commercially speaking, that is.

For while there can be no doubt Okolie is a gifted puncher and an awkward boxer to figure out, he is equally awkward in the context of being marketed and sold to an audience whose collective attention span is shortening by the hour. He is likely not helped, either, by the WBO cruiserweight belt he owns, which, quite naturally, serves to give the Londoner an inflated view of himself and his worth, as well as his standing on a global scale.

Sadly, whereas world titles in the past actually meant something, and were indicative of a fighter thriving at the very top of the sport, nowadays they are anything but. Nowadays, you can win a world title by effectively beating somebody of European title standard. Nowadays, you win just one of them and expect to be headlining a pay-per-view show in your first defence.

One could argue that's another way in which the game has changed. One could also argue that the reasons for recent abdications are merely symptoms of the terms established by the game-changers at the very outset; back when everything was about online presence, and everything was about pay-per-view.

Broken dreams

Robbie Davies Jnr tells **John Evans** about the freak injury that continues to haunt him

Photos: LEWIS STOREY/GETTY IMAGES

IT'S OVER: Davies' right foot dangles awkwardly

JUST over two weeks have passed since Robbie Davies Jnr took an innocuous step away from a Darragh Foley right hand and felt his leg crumble beneath him. The shock of leaving the ring with a broken fibula has worn off and his rehabilitation program is about to begin.

For the moment, all Davies can do is think and one thing is playing on his mind more than anything else.

It is frustrating him more than being forced onto the sofa with nothing to do except watch endless hours of daytime television. It is irritating him even more than that itch inside his cast that he just can't reach.

"It's been put down as a TKO loss," he said. "No punch landed at all in that third round so how did [referee] Marcus McDonnell start a count? You can see on the replays that he's looking right at it. He isn't at an awkward angle or anything. I step back, Foley throws a punch, I'm well out of range and you just see my leg crumble underneath me and I fall to the floor. The ref starts counting but even then, as I rollover, I look at Shane [McGuigan, his trainer] and tell him, 'It's snapped.' Out of pride I still jump up thinking, 'You're not counting me out, there was no punch.'

"Immediately after I go down, Shane started waving the white towel. It was a retirement.

"Getting carried out of the ring because your legs broken isn't something that ever comes into your mind, but the worst part is sites putting 'TKO for Foley' and putting out a photo of me on my back with him stood looking over me."

Davies still holds some hope that he may be able to go through official channels and get the result of the fight altered, something which would at least soothe his damaged pride whilst he figures out the full repercussions of that night in Liverpool.

The former British, Commonwealth and European super-lightweight champion knows that a conclusive defeat would be difficult to come back from at this stage of his career but the way the fight played out is another source of frustration for the Liverpudlian. For a round-and-a-half Davies looked - and felt - good, then a right hook from Foley changed everything.

"It was only a high-pressure fight because he was a late replacement because I was supposed to be fighting Liam Paro. In that one, he had everything to lose and I had it all to gain. With the switch of opponent, the shoe went on the other foot," Davies said.

"I've always been a slow starter, but I probably had the best first round I've ever had in my life. He hit me once in two rounds. I got so comfortable in the first round and a bit that my hands came a bit low. I was leaning back and he threw a punch.

"I jumped up so quickly out of embarrassment. I said, 'Good shot' to him laughing. The bell goes, and Shane asked how I was. I told him I was alright and then he asked how my ankle was. He said he'd seen my body weight land on my ankle before it popped back underneath me. I sat on the stool and he's giving me instructions and I just felt like a warmth wrap round my leg. The clapper went and he asked 'Is it alright?' and I said 'I'll tell you now.'"

Davies didn't have to wait long to find out. Normally any incident or unusual finish has reporters in the press seats craning their necks for a glance of the television crew monitors for a replay. This time, nobody felt the need for a second look. Davies - somehow - sat calmly on a stool whilst doctors tended to him but the look of shock on his face told the story.

"I've never broken a big bone, but I just knew it was broken. It was either wait for the stretcher or just get out of the ring. When I got into the back I was sitting down and they were offering me drugs and morphine but I didn't need it. They took me to the hospital and I was sitting on a bed. I started cooling down and the adrenaline was leaving me. I started to feel it and they gave me something for it. No pain ever actually kicked in. I just felt it start to sting a bit."

Boxing moves quickly. Foley took the fight as a late notice underdog but it didn't take long for the rumour mill to begin turning with speculation that the result would see him parachuted straight into a big fight. Davies has had his fair share of misfortune and ordinarily would find it hard to begrudge a fellow fighter capitalising on a touch of fortune but, at 33, he needs to think selfishly. Davies feels like he still has plenty left to give but needs meaningful fights rather than pure revenge missions. Correcting the result in a rematch may be consuming his thoughts while he sits in his living room watching Holly and Phil, but he is going to have watch things play out before he can plot a route back.

"People don't need to be thinking I'm gonna be out for the rest of the year," Davies said.

"I'm stewing on it. In the ring, Foley started celebrating but he came over to me and said that he didn't realise what had happened. He said I didn't have to give him the chance so that I could have a rematch, it would be the right thing to do. He's saying this to me and I'm not giving him much back. My head has just fell right off. I'm just looking at him nodding. That's the last thing I was thinking about then.

'I PROBABLY HAD THE BEST FIRST ROUND OF MY LIFE'

"At this level you normally fight twice a year. We fought in March so anytime from the end of July to September, I'll be back. I want the fight so, so much. It's so frustrating."

HORRBLE ENDING:
But Davies is keen to put the record straight, in more ways than one

Presented To
RICHIE KATES
ratulations Upon Your Induction
Into The
PENNSYLVANIA
BOXING HALL OF FAME
May 15, 2011

MAY 15, 2011: Kates is proudly inducted into the Pennsylvania Boxing Hall of Fame

The good man

Tris Dixon pays tribute to the unique and recently departed Richie Kates, the blood and thunder light-heavyweight with a conscience

THEY called him Mr Kates.

Such was the respect that perennial light-heavyweight contender Richie Kates had, it did not matter if you were in boxing, a work colleague in the New Jersey prison system or one of the youngsters he tried to teach the ways of the world to, he was referred to as Mr Kates.

Boxing obituaries will normally be about who fought who, what happened and what a fighter's legacy was. And while Richie Kates was a terrific fighter who only just – by the narrowest of margins – failed to crack the big time, those who knew him measured him by the type of man he was rather than the brilliant ring craftsman he had been throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s.

Kates, from Bridgeton, NJ, was born to parents who were sharecroppers in Savannah, Georgia, and was only a few months old when the family moved to New Jersey.

He had to learn how to fight early in life because he had 11 brothers and sisters, and reckoned he had about 70 amateur bouts, losing just five. He did menial jobs to make ends meet and worked for everything he had.

Aged 18, he made $50 for his first four-rounder in Baltimore and always joked that he gave his cutman $15 of that.

"I was a hard trainer. I always took it seriously," he said.

As a young man, Kates went to Joe Frazier's gym and sparred with the heavyweight great. While there, Kates sparred another future light-heavyweight contender Len Hutchins. Richie felt certain that he had Len's number and would often ask his manager, Joe Gramby, to make a fight with Hutchins.

"No, you're not going to beat this guy," Gramby told him.

Kates eventually got what he wanted.

"I remember, I wasn't supposed to beat Len Hutchins," Kates said. But in April of 1971, underdog Kates defeated Hutchins on a split decision in Philadelphia.

However, a couple of fights later, Richie lost for the first time when stopped by Eddie "Red Top" Owens. Still, a defeat wasn't the end of the world back then and Kates returned four months later, won four on the bounce and then avenged the Owens loss.

He fought in good class again, defeating Utah veteran Don Fullmer in September 1973, on points. Fullmer said his body "was going haywire" at the time and retired afterwards, but Kates learned from the former world title contender and moved on.

In May of 1974, Kates chinned the very good Jimmy Dupree in a round for the North American light-heavyweight title and, like Fullmer, Dupree never fought again and, through Gramby, Kates then started a side gig boxing in South Africa.

Richie defeated James Mathatho in Durban, returned to the US for two fights and then went back out to Durban where he beat Mohamed Afonso.

"At the time, I wasn't educated with the politics of apartheid, I was there to fight," Kates reasoned. He was a humble man and never believed any decision he made would have widespread consequences. He was a fighter, so he fought.

Kates signed for a big fight with former world title challenger Pierre Fourie, which was an eliminator for the WBA light-heavyweight title in everything but name, and Kates won over 10 rounds at Johannesburg's Rand Stadium.

Boxing News said Kates had handed Fourie "a real boxing lesson" and some ringsiders didn't even give their own fighter a round on the cards.

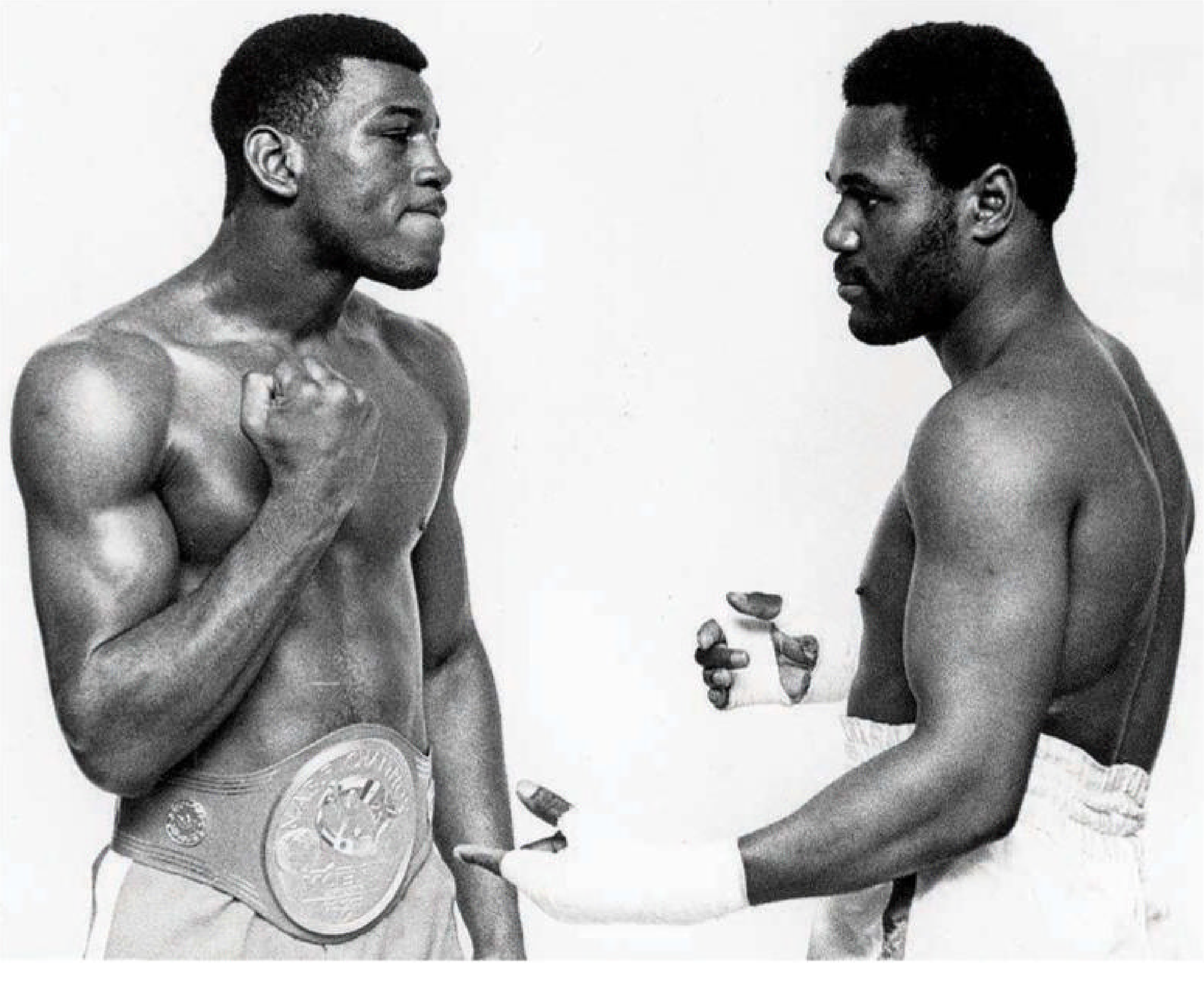
Promoter Russell Peltz, whom Kates boxed for 15 times in all – from late in 1970 against Paul Dickenson to Richie's final fight in 1983 – felt the Fourie win in South Africa and the Hutchins victory were the best results of Richie's career.

> 'RICHIE WAS THE ONLY GUY I FOUGHT WHO WOULD HIT ME THEN APOLOGISE'

Richie told the South African press that he had lured them in, trying not to look too good in his two earlier fights so Fourie's team would take the bait, and after beating Fourie, Kates was confident of defeating WBA champion Victor Galindez.

It wasn't to be.

Back in South Africa, on May 22 1976, Kates gave Galindez hell but eventually succumbed to the



BEFORE THE STORM: Kates later admitted he fought the wrong fight against Saad Muhammad [*left*]

Argentine with one second left of their 15-rounder.

South African journalist Bert Blewett was ringside in Johannesburg and his excitement was palpable, calling it “one of the most savage and sensational fights ever seen in South Africa.”

Blewett continued excitedly: “It was a fight of bloodiness, courage and controversy, and it had the crowd of more than 35,000 screaming from bell to bell.”

The Rand Stadium drama started in the third round. Kates claimed he cut Galindez with a left hook but referee Stan Christodoulou ruled it a head clash. Galindez screamed in anger and agony, and there was a melee in the ring as, according to Boxing News, spectators and reporters poured into the ring. With the Argentine’s team working on his cut, no one knew whether the fight was over, if Kates had won on cuts or if Richie had been disqualified. Kates thought he was going to be declared the winner.

“I assumed the fight was over and I was the champ,” Richie recalled. “I was as happy and excited as I ever was in my life.”

After about five minutes, the ring was cleared and the fight was back on, but Kates’s emotions had dropped through the ring canvas.

“I was thinking about how they were going to take the championship away from me,” Kates continued. “I was having trouble coming to terms with it. I went from the highest of highs to the lowest of lows. Emotionally, it tore me apart.”

Galindez asserted himself as the fight wore on but Richie hung tough, finally wilting with just one second remaining.

He admitted that, despite many good performances in the years that followed, he was never the same. Kates had another shot at Galindez a little more than a year on, in Italy, but lost a decision.

Kates was a real pro, blessed with more skills than luck. He stopped Harold Carter in Vineland two months on, then came up against Philadelphia’s improving Matthew Franklin in February 1978.

While Kates had conducted business overseas, the NABF had allowed Franklin, later Matthew Saad Muhammad, to fight for the vacant title, the one Richie had beaten Dupree for. Kates argued he should still have had the belt, and even though Franklin-Kates was postponed a few days after a snowstorm bleached the streets of Philly, Kates came out hot.

At the end of round four, Kates levelled the future Hall of Famer with a right hand that would have set off car alarms outside. “I thought that was it,” Kates said. “Goodnight.”

So did the 6,586 screaming Philly fans. The fight would have been stopped today.

Franklin rose unsteadily at the bell, was carried back to his corner and the war went on.

At the end of the fifth, Franklin did the same thing to Richie and Kates was saved by the bell. But Kates hadn’t fully recovered and Franklin bombed him out in the sixth. It had been extraordinary and they’d earned every cent of the $15,000 pot they divided.

Afterwards, Kates was taken to hospital and stories were leaked that he had suffered brain damage. He put it down to exhaustion as much as anything else, and said he was given a clean bill of health, but there were some macabre headlines in the local press that upset him even years later.

Given Philly’s exceptional back catalogue of incredible battles, it meant something that Gene Courtney, writing for the *Inquirer*, called it “the most savage fight in Philadelphia in more than a decade.”

Richie laughed fondly at memories of that fight when we spoke last year. “He [Franklin] wanted the fight more than I did,” Kates sighed. “I still thought I was the better fighter.”

Things weren’t getting any easier for Richie. In 1979, he fought in Rahway Prison in front of 400 paying fans and 40 inmates against ranked contender James Scott, who remarkably had been allowed to continue fighting behind the jail walls – and on TV – even though he faced another 30 years behind bars for serious crimes.

‘I DIDN’T WANT TO BE ONE OF THOSE FIGHTERS WHO STUCK AROUND TOO LONG’

Kates might have worked in the correctional system in an administrational capacity, but he was psyched out by the whole experience of fighting inside a maximum-security prison. Scott swamped Richie in the 10th and final round, with Kates never down but finally sagging on the ropes.

Years on, Scott joked about their fight saying, “Richie’s a nice guy. He’s the only guy I fought who when he hit me, he apologised. He’d hit you in the face, cut you in the eye and say ‘Excuse me’ and stuff like that. He hit me so much in the face he got me mad, especially when he said ‘Pardon me’ afterwards.”

Yet despite the rough, physical contests, veteran observers appreciated Kates’s intricacies as a fighter.

“More of a boxer, than a puncher, despite his 23 KOs,” assessed Peltz, even though Kates had the power to nearly flat-line Franklin with that right hand that caused the Spectrum to shake. Years ago, the Hall of Fame journalist Nigel Collins wrote of Richie, “In spite of his skill and outstanding record, Richie was not popular with Philly’s bloodthirsty fans. He was, and still is, a quick-handed counterpuncher. Not a go for broke bomber.”

And Kates was always a straightshooter. Perhaps that was a quality reinforced by his relationship with Gramby.

“Kates never argued with Gramby,” Peltz said. “Gramby was the boss and that was the way he managed. It was his way or the fighter could sit out. Kates respected him and Gramby was good to them. He never double-dealt them or anyone when his fighters fought for me. All the money was on the contract. No hidden payouts. One of the smartest boxing men I ever knew. His word was gold.”

After Scott, Kates still had big wins over future super-middleweight belt-holder Murray Sutherland at Pontiac’s Silverdome and he split a pair of contests with another very good ex-con Jerry Celestine in New Orleans, winning their rematch at the Superdome.

Kates called it a day after a fine run of form, winning his final five fights and scalping Jeff Lampkin and former world title challenger Jerry Martin in his last two fights, both in Atlantic City. Richie was 32 and still ranked in the top 10.

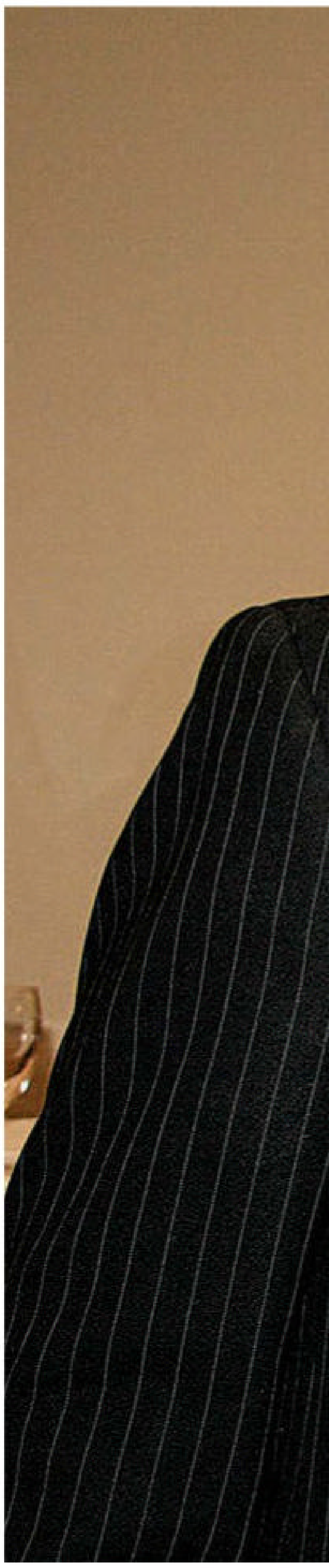
“When I retired, it was just time for me,” Kates told me over the phone in late 2020, happily discussing Scott, Saad Muhammad and the others.

“I wanted to know when it was time to get out. I didn’t want to be one of the fighters who sticks around too long.”

Kates was a gentleman and commanded respect. Even colleagues in the New Jersey correctional department called him Mr Kates, and so did the kids he worked with at the Vineland Police Athletic League gym in later years. It was there where his fatherly arm extended around the likes of Darrell Wilson and Bruce Seldon as they tried to relaunch their heavyweight careers with Kates’ tough love. They were inspired by him, wanted to impress him and they went to him because they knew they would get a straight-talking coach.

When anyone turned the music up too loud in the gym, Kates would instruct them, “turn that thing down.”

The dial was immediately spun anti-clockwise, a respectful hum would take over and his business would resume.



ALL SMILES: Kates alongside former super-lightweight contender Mike Everett

Kates worked in Trenton by day and went to the PAL to train aspiring boxers in the evening. He had first started working at the Department of Corrections in the late sixties after graduating from high school, departing for several years before returning in '96. There, he would assign inmates to programmes they might need for rehabilitation, taking into account treatment they required, too.

"I've always been a people person," Richie told me a couple of decades ago when I visited him at his home in Vineland. "Someone who believes you might be able to help turn someone's life around by giving him the proper instructions and guidance. I'd like to think that, through my job, I've been able to make a positive impact on a significant number of people."

Richie Kates, a kind and courteous man, did not have many regrets following a career that saw him win 44 fights and lose just six. Yes, he would say the Saad Muhammad night was "the stupidest fight I ever fought – I tried to outslug a slugger" but Kates was not just about boxing. His wisdom stretched beyond our fistic turf.

"I tell kids to do things the right way," Richie explained, of how he helped people in life. "I don't just train them, I take it a step further. The kids don't come in cursing, with their pants hanging by their butts, wearing doo rags or hats that are twisted to the side. I don't allow that. I send them outside and tell them not to come back until they get rid of the doo rag, pull up their pans and speak proper English. This isn't just about boxing. It's about life."

And Richie's life was a full one, in and out of the ring; it was so full that Peltz refused to remember him as a fighter or to judge him by his merits from those heady nights at the Spectrum and beyond.

In his brilliant Facebook tribute to Kates, Peltz wrote: "I could start by saying Richie Kates was one of the nicest boxers I ever knew, but that wouldn't be fair. He was one of the nicest people I ever knew."

"I try to be a good husband, a good parent and a good citizen," Richie once said to me. "I'm a church deacon and I have a variety of interests. I've seen so many fighters, including ex-champions, who are unable to put sentences together, who are begging for handouts. I take a look at my life and I consider myself fortunate."

Richie Kates passed away on Saturday, March 11. He was 69 and he was a good fighter and, yes, Mr Kates was a good man. BN

PREVIEWS

Previewing the best upcoming fights around the world

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING ★★★★ GOOD ★★★ FAIR ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ RUBBISH

The star ratings indicate how well the writer believes the fighters match up, the fight(s)' contextual significance, and how good the fight(s) will be

Photo: MARK ROBINSON/MATCHROOM

JOSHUA VS FRANKLIN
APR 1
THE O2, LONDON
LIVE ONLY ON

MISMATCH?
Perhaps, but Franklin seems like the ideal rival at this stage

Unshackled

★★★☆☆ MAIN EVENT
★★☆☆☆ UNDERCARD

After years of fighting on the highest of stages, Joshua can reset against Franklin, writes **Matt Christie**

THERE'S an argument doing the rounds that suggests **Anthony Joshua**, when taking on **Jermaine Franklin** this weekend, is embarking on the first make-or-break assignment of his career. That all the hard work he's put in since he started taking the sport seriously 13 or so years ago hinges on the outcome of this fight. Therefore, the marketeers might say, he's going into the ring with enough pressure on his shoulders to sink him.

The opposite might also be true. Because, if you think about it, this April 1 assignment comes with substantially less baggage than he's been carrying since he agreed to fight Charles Martin for the IBF heavyweight strap in April 2016. Gone, for now, are any belts to defend, win, or – as Joshua used to say (and even did at the end of his last fight) – throw in the air. He's under no pressure to sell out a football stadium. No pressure to generate record-breaking numbers on pay-per-view. And, frankly, no hugely threatening opponent to tie his brain in knots. Plenty of fans would have preferred a tougher rival than Franklin, but at least this isn't a scenario where every single question he's forced to answer will be about someone else he should be fighting instead. Though I don't doubt for one second that Joshua, particularly after back-to-back losses to Oleksandr Usyk, will feel the heat, this is also the first time in years when he can base himself in the present, take stock, and focus only on the matter at hand.

Back on his old O2 Arena stomping ground for the first time since halting Dominic Breazeale two months after trouncing Martin, Joshua knows that only an impressive thumping of Franklin, a decent but unspectacular American fringe contender, will do. And in truth, it's difficult to envision any other outcome.

FRANKLIN COMES WITH AMBITION, AND COUNTER-PUNCHING NOUS

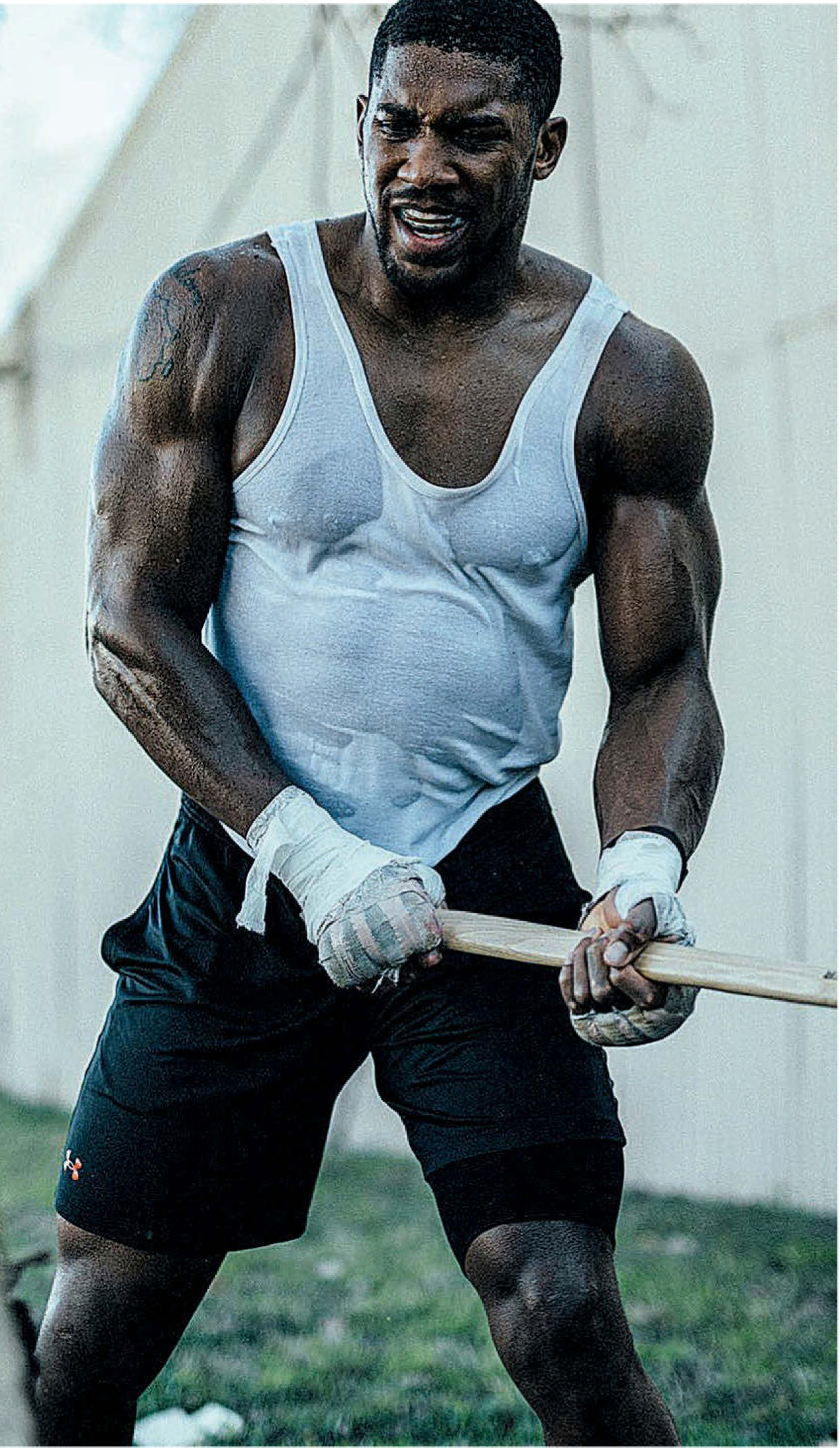
Franklin is just about passable as a comeback opponent, however. From Saginaw, Michigan, and 21-1 (17), the 29-year-old comes with ambition and is known to British fight fans after giving Dillian Whyte a scare in November. With Joshua watching at ringside, Franklin had plenty of success, exhibiting heart, skill and counter-punching nous, before losing a contentious decision after 12 rounds. But Whyte, coming off a one-sided KO loss to Tyson Fury, wasn't at his best as he attempted to showcase the techniques he'd been learning under new trainer, Buddy McGirt. There's some synergy here and there, of course, as Joshua makes his first start under latest coach, Derrick James. Even so, when the underdog's best performance is a defeat, making the case for the upset isn't straightforward.

It's not made any easier when watching Franklin's efforts against the likes of Pavel Sour, Rydell Booker and Jerry Forrest. Though a unanimous 10-round victor over Sour and Booker, Franklin lost rounds to both and, against Forrest, only two of the three judges felt he'd done enough to win a close fight. Now imagine how Joshua, 24-3 (22), would get on against those three stalwarts and you get, perhaps, a better indication of the difference in levels here.

Joshua, after all, is unquestionably one of the best heavyweights in the world. It's a concern that he's lost two on the bounce but his performances against Usyk should only highlight how far he's come. Once overly reliant on his brute strength and power, Joshua displayed nuances and maturity that were absent earlier in his career. Let's not forget, either, that Usyk is arguably the best technician in the entire sport and Joshua – in the rematch – gave him a tremendously difficult scrap. To suggest that 'AJ' was merely 'exposed' is unfair. Those of a kinder mindset might conclude that Joshua proved his worth at the highest of levels in a way that he didn't while outslugging an ageing Wladimir Klitschko or outboxing a woefully prepared Andy Ruiz Jnr.

But to suggest that the losses to Usyk were mere blips would not be true either. There's still a lot of work to be done and his now infamous outburst in the aftermath of the return highlighted he's aware of that too. Whether he's managed to forgive himself for encountering a boxer who is undoubtedly his superior remains to be seen, but the fact that he, one, took that rematch in the first place and, two, is still so keen to progress and improve while a rich-beyond-his-wildest-dreams 33-year-old, suggests he's far stronger psychologically than many give him credit for.

Those who call this a woeful mismatch may appear to have been proved right when Joshua scores his quickest victory since blowing away Eric Molina in three rounds in December 2016. But one



WORKING HARD: Joshua will be acutely aware of what he needs to do

suspects a rapid and uncomplicated triumph – as Joshua hurls those hurtful blows through the middle while Franklin dutifully scampers towards him – is exactly what he needs.

On the undercard, Italy's **Matteo Signani**, 32-6-3 (12) defends his European middleweight title against Wokingham's **Felix Cash**, 16-0 (10), in a bout that on paper looks like a vehicle for the latter.

Signani is seemingly a beneficiary of the EBU belt losing some lustre in recent years; to suggest he's the best middleweight in his continent outside of the world belt-holders would be absurd. But he's canny, durable, and well-schooled enough to give Cash plenty to think about. Standing 5ft 10ins and 43 years old, he will be the shorter and older man by three inches and 14 years respectively.

But Cash has struggled for form since he impressively halted Denzel Bentley in three rounds back in April 2021. He was dropped twice before squeaking past Magomed Madiev in February 2022 and the cut he suffered above the left eye was reopened when he outpointed Celso Neves over eight rounds 10 months later.

Cash will hope to start this one quickly. Signani takes a few rounds to get going as was evidenced in his last two bouts – a technical points loss after five and a TKO in the seventh, both against Frenchman, Anderson Prestot. Team Cash will no doubt be encouraged by both performances and their man can win this inside the distance while returning to form.

Matchroom's Texan starlet, southpaw **Austin 'Ammo' Williams**, 13-0 (9), gets his latest test when he faces Coventry's 29-year-old **River Wilson-Bent**, 14-2-1 (6), over 10 rounds. Williams, 26, is expected to get the job done before that final bell sounds.

It's a shame that **Fabio Wardley**, 15-0 (14), isn't getting the chance to defend his British heavyweight title on the card. Instead, he goes for the WBA continental bauble and victory over 36-year-old Florida-based New Yorker, **Michael Polite Coffie**, will no doubt see his current No.14 ranking with that organisation improve beyond logic.

Coffie, 13-3 (10), is wily, tough and limited. Wardley, still improving at 28, may not have things all his own way but anything less than a stoppage victory would be a surprise.

Hyde's **Campbell Hatton**, 10-0 (3), won't find it easy against Tamworth's **Louis Fielding**, 10-7 (4), at lightweight while there's also runouts for super-featherweight **Jordan Flynn**, 8-0 (1), and light-heavyweight **John Hedges**, 7-0 (2).

THE VERDICT **Expect Joshua to test Franklin's durability early.**

BACK TO BASICS: Joshua knew things had to change

MISUNDERSTOOD

The last time we saw Anthony Joshua in a ring he was struggling to compose himself after losing to Oleksandr Usyk for a second time. A lot has changed since then, writes ***Declan Taylor***

Photo: FRANCOIS NEL/GETTY IMAGES

EDDIE HEARN had not even finished asking the question and Anthony Joshua had already delivered his answer.

It was as if the two-time heavyweight belt-holder had been wrestling with the reasons behind his motivation to fight in the weeks and months before his promoter had put it to him in front of the world's media. "Money," Joshua had said. "I like making money."

In the cold light of day, the quote made Joshua look like the archetypal prizefighter who, somewhere along the line, pivoted away from building his legacy in the ring to building his bank balance outside it. Nobody should be blamed for doing that, either.

But away from the glare of the press conference, where he and his opponent for this Saturday at the O2 Arena, Jermaine Franklin, had attempted to sell the fight from their top table, Joshua delivered a far more measured explanation of what he was getting at.

"Money was just the first thing that came into my mind then but it's legacy as well," he says when asked if he stood by what he'd said. "Money is just part of a big jigsaw puzzle.

"The reason I said money was I know how much it helps people. Money is my love language because I can't be there physically or emotionally because I am working but I can wire you some cash. "I can't be there for people, I can't be a shoulder to cry on because I don't have the time or energy for that – I need to train – but if I can help you out then I will. I know how much finances help and I do a lot of charity work that needs funding.

"I know what it is like to have nothing and for nobody to give you a look-in or care. Being in a position where I can help means a lot and that's where money comes into it."

Joshua, for his part, is said to be worth around £130m which is no surprise when you consider he has been fighting for eight-figure purses for the best part of five years. But the pursuit of more riches will have remained a key driver when it came to assessing his place in the sport following back-to-back defeats to Oleksandr Usyk which truly hurt him. Indeed, the second fight with Usyk, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia last August, is probably best remembered for what happened at the end of the fight. He had thrown Usyk's world title belts out of the ring and then had to be restrained by his cousin Benga Ileyemi and Dereck Chisora before he stormed out of the ring. He eventually made his way back to the ring, found a microphone and launched the now infamous tirade which has amassed millions upon millions of views on Youtube. For him it was an eruption that was years in the making and within a few hours he was in tears at the post-fight press conference.

'I HAVE TAKEN EVERY CHALLENGE BUT I MUST DO BETTER'

"In the ring, it was tough," Joshua recalls. "People might not see how tough it is. It happened quickly. I have taken every challenge that has come my way and I have done my best but I have got to do better that's for sure.

"Along the journey we really pushed for that 'undisputed', we had the 'Road to Undisputed' with the JD Sports hashtag, we were pushing it with all the brands and just at that last hurdle I failed and that's what you saw in the press conference. "In the ring it was just me expressing that I came from the road and the mud, I never had a dad guiding me through boxing, telling me 'come on son, you've got some talent'. I did this shit by myself. I went from grassroots boxing to around the world. "At age 18 - when I was going down the wrong road - I saw another path and it took a lot to make that decision. I got rid of a lot of things in my life to focus on boxing and it hit me. "I always thought I would only feel like that when I retire, when I said I am done with boxing, I thought then I feel how much it means to me, but it happened there and then. "I have no regrets, no way, if you don't like it don't tune in because that is what you are going to get from me; raw and uncut. That's life, it won't always be perfect. People go through things, it's a journey and if you tune in you will see it all.

"I haven't put it to bed, not really, you use it to fuel you. Everything that I have learned I have put into this camp. I can't just forget the things I have learned, I have to put it all into this camp." As it transpired, this camp has involved an entire overhaul of the training staff and location. As such, Franklin has questioned Joshua's decision to link up with Derrick James after just one fight with Robert Garcia. Franklin's suggestion was that AJ should start blaming himself instead of others.

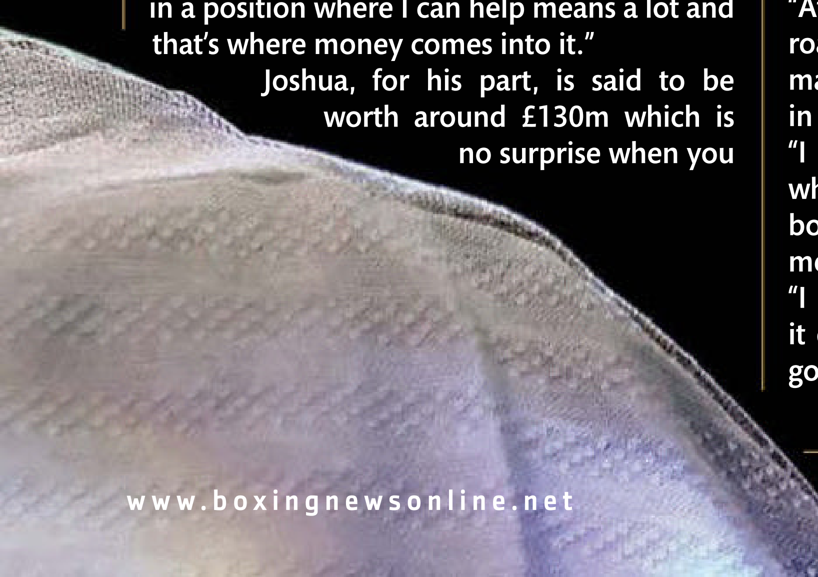
But the switch to James, and the relocation to Texas, provided far more than just a new voice in the corner, according to Joshua. This particular move, he says, provided him with some peace and quiet.

"All along I've wanted to build things away from boxing," he says, in reference to his myriad commercial obligations. "Because of all of the stories I heard from boxing where people left the game without a penny to their name. "Throughout my career I put a lot of energy into building other things, alongside trying to defend my titles, it's challenging but it is part of who I am and what has made me who I am, I am a driven person.

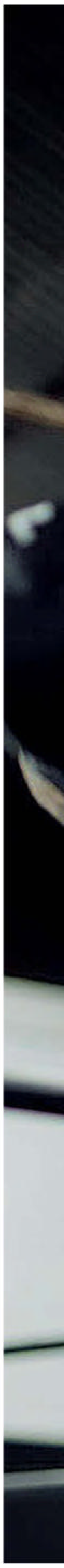
"When I talk about distractions, I know a lot of people. the people you see at Wembley stadium or the O2, I probably know 30-40 per per cent of them. I was quite a well-known kid before boxing and then boxing happened and everyone knows me and the phone always rings. I have had the same number since I was 19.

"Then I decided I needed to put a lot of things on the backburner and put my heart into the sport. You can have your mind in the game, because your mind is a computer, it's clockwork. But to wake up every morning with a passion for life, your heart has to be in something.

You have to be driven by something and when you are driven by boxing again, it's a different look in life.



KEEN LISTENER:
Joshua obeys James,
no questions asked



"I was fine here but I wanted to search for better and the better was in Dallas. The better could have been here and I would have been comfortable staying here, but it wasn't. It was never that I needed to get away, it was just about where the best place is for me and it was Texas."

So why James? After splitting with Robert McCracken in the wake of the first Usyk defeat in the September of 2021, Joshua had allowed for some familiarity by retaining the services of Angel Fernandez as part of the team that included Garcia at the top of the tree. This time, however, everyone was cut and off to Texas AJ went.

"When I was with Rob McCracken I brought on two extra trainers because Rob was the top guy," Joshua explains. "They could then work under him and build an empire and a structure together.

"But it didn't work. It just didn't work because it was me who chose Joby [Clayton] and Angel and not Rob. The second time around I told Angel to choose because I just wanted to work. It didn't matter how I saw the trainers, if the coaches don't get along then it's not going to feed positive energy into me. So I gave the reins to Angel to make the decision.

> **'IT DIDN'T WORK BECAUSE I CHOSE JOBY AND ANGEL'**

"This time I went on my own, it was my own personal decision and that's how I ended up in Texas. I am only working with Derrick now but there has been no fall out."

James is currently considered one of the very top trainers in elite professional boxing thanks in no small part to his work with American duo Errol Spence Jr and Jermell Charlo among others. James said he laughed to himself watching Joshua try and fail to beat Usyk for the second time due to the tactics he employed and has been tasked with leading Joshua back to the top of the heavyweight pile. With Usyk and Tyson Fury around, it seems like a tall order but Joshua insists he trusts what he's hearing in Dallas.

"He can tell me to do something and I will instantly do it," says Joshua, who has been actually training alongside Spence at times during this camp. "I am more of a practical learner, I am not really one for theory. "If I can see or watch someone do something, then I can probably do it after. That's how I learned boxing so quickly, I watched people and copied them. We talk and he feeds on what I tell him."

And they're not reinventing the wheel in Texas either. It's old school and Joshua is responding to that as he prepares for a fight with his career hanging in the balance.

"I wake up early, cardio, we have a house with me and two guys, my performance director and physio," he says. "We get up and do our cardio, road work, calisthenics, stretching, breakfast, gym, sleep, core, eat, physio, balance work, film study, bed for 9:30pm. Up in the morning and go again, with two days off. "When you are in camp you have to give up things, but that helps you gain other things.

"Even though it's a routine with sacrifice, in the long run I am going to gain things and get better, I am going to have more energy, I am going to have more passion for my training.

"Do you want to go into a training camp and have shit training sessions because you have been out and not slept? You need to dedicate yourself and get better within the space of two-three weeks and start beating up sparring partners. That's what I want."

On Saturday, Joshua returns to punching people for real. Not since he rematched Andy Ruiz Jnr in Saudi Arabia have the stakes been this high for him in a career which will turn 10 years old in October. Now it is time to see whether there is another jackpot around the corner or whether, in his own money game at least, he is a busted flush. **BN**

C3
FOAM
EVERLAST

THERE IN SPIRIT

MBS AY:
e se oclai d
gges cher in the
athe ght division
ys h the st
ape s life

Harlem Eubank returns to York Hall, the hallowed venue where Seb, his cousin and best friend, last saw him fight. By ***Declan Taylor***

IT WAS five years ago this month that Seb Eubank took his seat in the crowd at York Hall to watch his cousin and best friend Harlem make light work of the fifth fight of his career.

It was business as usual for Harlem that night, winning five and sharing one of the six rounds against Bulgarian Angel Emilov to move serenely to 5-0. Later, the cousins and their friends would head down the road to Brick Lane for a celebratory feed.

As plant-based athletes, Seb and Harlem insisted that they eschew the famous salt beef bagels that most of the late-night revellers were most interested in on that particular street and instead headed to Mooshies, a vegan burger joint.

As they ate, they reflected on the fight and chatted about the future; Seb had enjoyed a winning start to his professional career in Manchester a month earlier and the pair had big plans in the sport. Neither of them knew it would be the last time Seb would ever watch his cousin box in the flesh.

In July 2021, Seb Eubank, the second son of Chris Sr, died after suffering a heart attack while he watched the sunset from the sea in Dubai. Back home in England, Harlem and the rest of the Eubank family would never be the same again.

Since that night in Mooshies, Harlem has moved to 16-0 and is now the headline act as he returns to York Hall to face Christian Uruzquieta on Friday night. His late cousin will be front and centre in his mind once more.

“York Hall was the last place he watched me fight in March 2018,” he tells Boxing News. “So now when I fight there I really feel his presence and energy with me. “Me and Seb both started boxing at the same time, we went down the amateur gym together. I started late at 18. We trained together and he was one of the big motivators for me.

“Every fight, he was sending me messages and flying from the middle east to come and watch my fights and be with me in the dressing room. He really gave me that early encouragement. He told me I really could do this.

“He was one of the big motivators for me. It’s difficult but I really feel his presence with me as I go into these fights, especially at York Hall.”

Often the loss of someone close to you, particularly in sudden or tragic circumstances, can have a profound effect on the way you view life. For Eubank, now 29, that goes without saying.

“We don’t necessarily know the answers and why things happen when they do,” he adds. “I have strong faith in the creator and sometimes there’s a bigger plan.

“Because if you look at it any other way you just can’t make sense of it. Sometimes we’ve done all we came here to do in this physical plane and it’s time to pass onto the next, we’ve fulfilled our mission so we can depart. Viewing it like that has helped me process it but a lot of us are still going through that process now. “It is crazy when you look back at how everything has panned out. But I’ve got a lot of good memories with Seb and that’s what I try to focus on and that’s what brings me happiness.”

INTO THE SUNSET: Harlem still tries to make sense of Seb’s passing

Eubank is speaking on a rare rest day in training camp as he prepares for another step up in what he describes as a ‘slow-burner’ or a career to date. The next day, British lightweight champion Gavin Gwynne will arrive for sparring. Having fought four times in 2022, Eubank has more momentum now than he’s ever had.

He has always trodden a very different path to Chris Jnr, even though aligning himself to his cousin may have opened more doors. That said, Harlem was supposed to box on the undercard of Eubank v Conor Benn but he, along with all the other undercard fighters, were left out of pocket as a result of the clomifene found in Benn’s system by VADA.

Harlem was also there 12 weeks later when Eubank was dropped and stopped by Liam Smith inside four rounds in his first fight since the start of the Benn saga. His cousin knew something wasn’t right.

“I was in the changing room beforehand and I saw the whole event unfold,” he says. “The energy was different.

“I was taking a few videos like usual and I looked at them and was kind of thinking ‘this doesn’t look right’. The energy in the video didn’t look like someone who was about to go out into the firepit.

“Chris is unfazed, he is untouchable in mindset and how he prepares but I didn’t see that in him in the dressing room that night. He knows what he has to put right to amend it next time.

“He wasn’t like I’ve seen him in the build-up to other fights. He knows deep down that wasn’t a true account of himself. Only he knows the reason behind that.

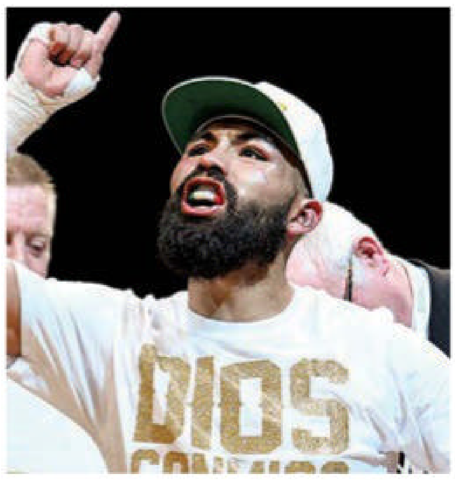
“A lot of people noticed. Paul Smith, Liam’s brother, was in to watch the handwraps and he even said afterwards that he thought Chris seemed defeated before the fight in the dressing room. That is not Chris Eubank Jnr. I’ve never seen him like that before but it all comes down to preparation and only he knows how he prepared for that. But I think in the next fight he will show a truer account of himself.”

It was the worst possible start to what may be a pivotal year in Eubank Jnr’s career. Now Harlem is vying to kick off his own 2023 in style. And, should all go to plan, there will only be one method of celebration on his mind.

“Well Mooshies closed down during lockdown but now they’ve moved to Hard Rock Cafe and they do a pop-up there so maybe we should go as a tribute,” he adds. “If not, I’ll find another spot to reminisce on those good nights. “The loss of Seb is still very real and we deal with it on a daily basis. But whenever I get a chance to celebrate his life I will. He’ll be there with me on Friday.”

> “CHRIS IS UNFAZED, HE IS UNTOUCHABLE IN HIS MINDSET, BUT I DIDN’T SEE THAT BEFORE LIAM SMITH”

Photo: HUW FAIRCLOUGH/GETTY IMAGES



HIGHLY WINNABLE

Uruzquieta can go rounds but the Mexican is not expected to defeat Eubank at York Hall

AFTER turning professional in 2017, **Harlem Eubank** stated he had no intention of rushing his progress. And on Friday night, in Bethnal Green, the 29-year-old takes another sensible step forward against Mexico's **Christian Uruzquieta**, 21-5-2 (8).

Eubank, three years younger than his opponent at 29, has been improving steadily in recent years. Flashy at times, and a decent puncher when he sits down on his blows, the 16-0 (6) Eubank is nonetheless outside of world contention. Uruzquieta [*above*] is tough but beatable. Two of his five losses came inside schedule, most recently against Lewis Ritson in December 2021. The Mexican tends to lose at hgher levels but he edged then-unbeaten Irishman, Ray Moylette, over 10 rounds in Castlebar just over four years ago. Therefore Eubank shouldn't expect to get things all his own way.

Eubank defeated Tom Farrell over 10 rounds at this same York Hall venue in November and a similar result looks a solid bet, but we have a feeling that the sheer volume of punches that Uruzquieta throws could unsettle the favourite along the way.

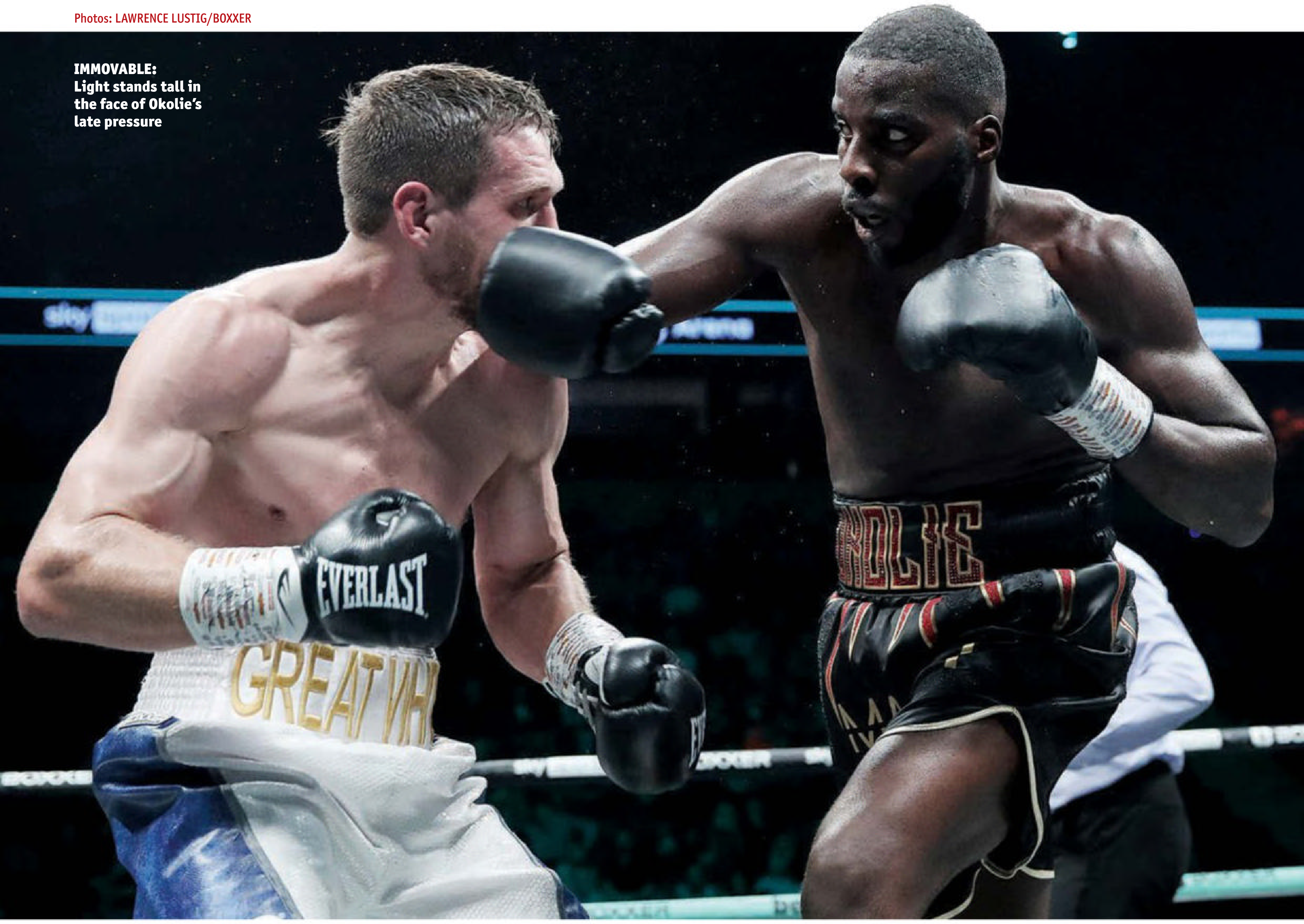
There's two further well-matched 10-rounders on the card. The first sees the 10-1 (6) **Nick Parpa** of Palmers Green, London, take on Middlesbrough's **Michael Webster**, 7-0 (5), for the vacant English cruiserweight title. Both have decent power but only 31-year-old Parpa, a former Southern Area champ, has any experience over the 10-round distance. Webster, though inactive since April last year, has been busier in recent years with Parpa only banking 140 seconds of action since 2019.

Former English welterweight boss, the 11-2 (3) **Harry Scarff** of Derby,takes on Barnet's **Jordan Dujon**, 8-1, over 10 intriguing rounds.

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING ★★★★ GOOD ★★★ FAIR ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ RUBBISH

Reporters' star ratings for main events and undercards are based on in-ring entertainment, competitiveness and whether overall expectation was met

Photos: LAWRENCE LUSTIG/BOXXER


IMMOVABLE: Light stands tall in the face of Okolie's late pressure

Light at the end of the tunnel

Okolie finishes strong but Light lasts the course in a forgettable affair, writes **Andy Whittle** from ringside

MANCHESTER
MARCH 25

★★☆☆☆ MAIN EVENT
★★★☆☆ UNDERCARD
★★★☆☆ ATMOSPHERE

IT'S A long time since I heard a bout booed and I can't recall ever hearing it during a 'world title' clash, but a sizeable number of those in attendance at Manchester Arena were distinctly unimpressed at the fare being served up by Hackney's **Lawrence Okolie** and New Zealander **David Light**. Okolie, a boxer inactive for just over a year in which training and promotional teams have changed, prevailed in a one-sided yet oft gritty, ugly encounter.

Bearded Light, to be fair, took what heavy punishment came his way, which until the later stages wasn't a great deal, without ever looking like wilting but he didn't really offer a great deal by way of return. Of the completed 12 rounds, I gave him only a couple.

Lawrence, workmanlike, was winning rounds without really excelling but it wasn't until the 10th that he landed anything of any real substance, a trio of rights bucking the trend.

Referee Bob Williams docked Okolie a point for holding in the 11th which spurred the WBO cruiserweight belt-holder into action, a right to the head on the resumption and a great right uppercut hit home, and, just for a moment, the Londoner looked superb. It left me musing that if that was the effect losing a point had then maybe Bob ought to have taken it a good deal earlier.

A win is a win, however, and one suspects the Hackney man won't be too bothered by any criticism of his victory. An outing closer to home next time might prove beneficial as one doubts the Manchester fight fans, some of whom left long before the end, will be chomping at the bit for more. Cards reading 116-112, 117-110 and 119-108 confirmed Okolie's win.

Manchester's Central Area champion **Michael Gomez Jnr** went in with Grimsby's unbeaten **Levi Giles** with the vacant English super-featherweight title up for grabs and came out on top, triumphing by way of a split decision result.

Things had been close early doors with Levi, busier behind the jab off the back foot, maybe just having the better of things but from the fourth, and buoyed by landing a nice right hook and then a follow-up uppercut, the balance began to swing Michael's way.

Increasingly enjoying it and still on the front foot, Gomez was proving the busier and he finished the sixth with a pair of right uppercuts by which time Giles was marked below the right eye.

A one-two at the top of the eighth saw Michael start well but he did have to endure a couple of little spells on the ropes before, with heads sometimes bashing, he rallied again late, scoring to the body as the clock ran down.

Judge Mark Lyson, doubtless crediting Giles for his stronger early rounds showing scored 96-95 for the Grimsby man but both Mike Alexander and Bob Williams went for the home favourite scoring 97-94 and 97-93 respectively. Man in the middle was Darren Sarginson.

Burton's **Frazer Clarke** was back in action and in familiar surrounds too in a scheduled eight against experienced Romanian Bogdan Dinu who, now 36 and not the most active boxer on the circuit, had suffered KO losses in his two most recent outings.

One of those losses was at the hands of Daniel Dubois in Telford two years ago when a weighty right to the chin early in the second round proved his undoing and there was to be no change of fortunes here when, having suffered damaged ribs (one suspects from a right in the closing moments of the round), he retired, unable to continue, at the end of the second.

It wasn't all good for Fraze, however. Though firmly in control he picked up a little diagonal cut above the right eye when heads clashed late in the opener, a wound that never really worsened due to the curtailing of hostilities at the end of the next. Referee was Mark Lyson.

SCRAPPY: Okolie will lose a point for holding

Heavy-handed Barnsley super-middleweight **Callum Simpson** has been stopping opponents for the fun and had won his last eight inside the distance. Could Basel-based but Portuguese-born **Celso Neves**, who pushed former British and Commonwealth champion Felix Cash close over eight last time out, buck the trend?

The answer was no and in what was his first real outing in the spotlight Simpson wasn't hanging around. Having sold a shed-load of tickets he was straight into action, a couple of jabs and a short right the prelude to a sustained burst which sent Celso to his knees.

The visitor did well to see out the session in the face of some heavy pressure and though Simpson, looking relaxed, proved a shade quieter in the next he was up early for the third. Dominant again, he found the target with a pair of telling right uppercuts before, in a flash, a right cross caught Neves as he moved in to throw a shot of his own and down he went once more.

Celso, seemingly not knowing what was good for him, hauled himself upright to beat Mr Sarginson's count by the merest fraction but the Manchester official had seen enough and quite rightly waved it off with just 96 seconds of the round gone.

Irish middleweight **Aaron McKenna** faced a late change of opponent with Hamilton's much heavier **Jordan Grant** being drafted at the 11th hour. This one, again overseen by Mr Lyson, ended 60-54 for McKenna at the conclusion of six watchable yet increasingly one-sided rounds. The bigger, red-haired Grant picked up a cut by the corner of the left eye along the way.

Another tasty looking matchup was the slated six between Penygraig's unbeaten **Rhys Edwards** and Liverpudlian **Brian Phillips** who had lost out by just a single point to Gomez Jnr at Oldham in October while challenging for the aforementioned Central Area title.

ENGLISH CHAMP: Gomez Jnr tags Giles en route to victory

It finished 60-55 for the Welshman who spent the vast majority of the 18 minutes on the back foot as Phillips pressed. But Edwards was scoring with the classier more precise shots.

Sheffield's 'Dr Steel' **Shakiel Thompson**, having won six of nine early, was looking to inflict a rare inside the distance defeat on experienced Pole **Robert Talarek** but had to settle for a distance win with Mr Lyson, having docked him a point in the closing session for a low blow, scoring 59-54.

Lightweight **Frankie Stringer** went on after the main event and saw off Poland's **Jakub Laskowski** who, after a half decent start to his career, had suffered 22 straight losses. No surprise that Stringer should emerge victorious but he was seriously hampered in the closing two rounds after going over on his ankle and being counted late in the fifth. Mr Lyson had it 58-55.

Stockwell's **Samuel Antwi** rounded off proceedings in front of an almost empty arena with a 60-55 victory over 30-year-old Panamanian **Omir Rodriguez** who had come to have a go and refused for the most part to be backed up by the more industrious Londoner. Third man was Darren Sarginson.

Southpaw **Karriss Artingstall**, from just down the road in Macclesfield, secured a third paid victory, proving too much for Bolton's **Linzi Buczynskyj**, referee Lyson having her a 60-55 victor. The evening's sole four-round contest, between one fight Hull novice **Harvey Lambert** and Warrington's **Casey Brown** went the way of the former with Mr Sarginson scoring 40-37.

THE VERDICT **Understandably disappointing return for Okolie against granite-tough challenger.**

FULL RESULTS

Lawrence Okolie (159lbs 2oz), 19-0 (14), w pts 12 **David Light** (159lbs), 20-1 (1); **Frazer Clarke** (134 1/2lbs), 6-0 (5), w rtd 2 **Bogdan Dinu** (133lbs 10oz), 20-5 (16); **Michael Gomez Jnr** (183lbs 10oz), 19-1 (5), w pts 10 **Levi Giles** (183lbs), 13-1 (3); **Aaron McKenna** (164lbs 2oz), 16-0 (8), w pts 6 **Jordan Grant**, 6-3; **Callum Simpson** (141lbs 2oz), 11-0 (9), w rsf 3 **Celso Neves** (143 1/4lbs), 9-4-2 (2); **Rhys Edwards** (221lbs), 14-0 (4), w pts 6 **Brian Phillips** (198 3/4lbs), 12-4 (3); **Shakiel Thompson** (159 3/4lbs), 10-0 (6), w pts 6 **Robert Talarek** (163lbs 14oz), 27-18-3 (18); **Samuel Antwi** (221lbs), 15-2 (6), w pts 6 **Omir Rodriguez** (198 3/4lbs), 13-5-1 (6); **Karris Artingstall** (159 3/4lbs), 3-0, w pts 6 **Linzi Buczynskyj** (163lbs 14oz), 4-2; **Frankie Stringer** (159lbs 2oz), 5-0, w pts 6 **Jakub Laskowski** (159lbs), 4-23-1 (2); **Harvey Lambert** (134 1/2lbs), 2-0 (1), w pts 4 **Casey Brown** (133lbs 10oz), 4-2.

Barnstormer!

Gritty Baluta battles back to edge Cain in a daredevil thriller, writes **Matt Bozeat**

TELFORD

MARCH 25

★★★★★ MAIN EVENT

★★★★☆ UNDERCARD

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

DOWN twice in the opening round, **Ionut Baluta** snatched a controversial split verdict over Liverpool puncher **Andrew Cain** in a 10-round fight of the year contender at the International Centre.

After eight rounds, Baluta, from Romania and living in Watford, was behind by two and eight points, with the third judge having it level.

He set up a deciding last round by handing Cain a count early in the ninth, rushing him to the ropes and slinging punches until a right found the Liverpudlian's jaw. And Baluta, cut under his right eyebrow during that ninth, possibly won the fight in the last 45 seconds of the 10th.

Cain, whose nose bled from the sixth, boxed well for two minutes and then found himself with nowhere to go after Baluta lunged in. Baluta connected with a couple of clean punches that may have swung the round – and the fight – his way. It was mesmerising stuff from start to finish.

Cain was still ahead on my card at the final bell and judge Christophe Fernandez agreed, scoring 96-91.

He was overruled by Francisco Alloza Rosa and John Latham, who scored 95-92 and 94-93 respectively for Baluta.

The 10-rounder between super-bantamweights **Jason Cunningham** and **Miguel Gonzalez** was easier to score.

Judges Agapito Gomez, Marcus McDonnell and Giulio Piras all had it 99-91.

Cunningham dominated the smaller Chilean, easing his way into the fight behind his jab and the upping the tempo from the middle rounds without ever really looking like he would force the stoppage.

There was better action in the 10-round rematch between Stoke middleweight **Nathan Heaney** and **Jack Flatley** (Bolton).

Heaney won a technical points decision last September and won the rematch by scores of 99-93 (Jan Christensen), and 97-93 (Howard Foster and Jesus Morata Garcia).

Heaney started fast. He raced to the centre of the ring and slammed a right hand off Flatley's jaw. Heaney unloaded furiously, but Flatley got through the storm and looked to get his jab working.

Flatley landed enough to bloody Heaney's nose in the third, but for most of the remaining rounds, Heaney smartly boxed around him, picking clean single shots. Best punch he picked was a left hook in the fifth that knocked out Flatley's gum shield. Flatley was cut on his right eye after a clash of heads in the same session.

Wycombe's **Raven Chapman** dominated her featherweight 10-rounder against **Linda Lecca**, a former 115lbs belt-holder from Peru. Victor Loughlin, Mr Fernandez and Mr Alloza Rosa all scored 100-89 after Chapman scored a knockdown in the last. Chapman was the aggressor from start to finish. The second half of the fight was harder for Lecca as her feet slowed and Chapman increased her punch output. She dropped Lecca with a flurry in a neutral corner in the last and the Peruvian did well to stay on her feet after taking a clean right to the chin in the last 30 seconds.

Liverpool's **Brad Strand** stepped up to eight rounds and outclassed the willing-but-limited **Kevin Trana** (Nicaragua), boxing behind a fast jab to win every round for referee John Latham, while **Owen Cooper** (Worcester) needed only one punch to see off **Eber Tobar**, a sweeping left hook leaving the Colombian dazed and defenceless. Referee Chris Dean stepped in two minutes, one second into the second of six.

Mr Dean counted out Argentinian heavyweight **Ramon Ibarra** just 35 seconds into his four threes against Chatham's **Moses Itauma**.

Itauma walked flabby Ibarra into a neutral corner and a southpaw left drove him along the ropes and into the path of a right hook that dropped him.

Mr Dean waved off the six-rounder between Nottingham's **Ezra Taylor** (Nottingham) and Czech southpaw **Ales Makovec** after two minutes, 38 seconds of the second after Makovec got up at 'nine' from a second knockdown. It was scheduled for six.

Telford southpaw **Macauley Owen** was a 60-53 (Mr Latham) winner over stubborn Spaniard **Christian Lopez Flores**, who was docked a point in the fourth and cut over his right eye in the fifth.

Northampton super-welterweight **Ben Fail** made an impressive return, punishing Nicaragua's **Eligio Palacios** with hard southpaw punches and wasting little before knocking him out at 1-28 of the sixth and final. Palacios took the count on his knees. Mr Dean refereed and he scored Thamesmead's **Natty Ngwenya** a 40-35 winner over Poland's **Pawel Strykowski** after a knockdown in the dying seconds.

Ilkeston southpaw **Jimmy Smith** made a promising debut, giving Brierley Hill centurion **MJ Hall** one of his harder nights, bloodying his nose during a torrid third round on his way to a 40-36 win for Mr Latham.

CLOSE CALL: Baluta gets it at the end of 10 wild rounds

THE VERDICT **Cain unlucky but credit Baluta for his fight back.**

FULL RESULTS

Ionut Baluta (120lbs), 16-4 (3), w pts 10 **Andrew Cain** (120lbs), 10-1 (9); **Jason Cunningham** (121 1/2lbs), 32-7 (7), w pts 10 **Miguel Gonzalez** (121 1/4lbs), 33-3 (9); **Nathan Heaney** (159 1/4lbs), 17-0 (6), w pts 10 **Jack Flatley** (159lbs), 20-4-1 (4); **Raven Chapman** (124lbs), 6-0 (2), w pts 10 **Linda Lecca** (125lbs), 15-6-2-4 NC (3); **Brad Strand** (122lbs), 10-0 (3), w pts 8 **Kevin Trana** (122 1/2lbs), 15-3-2 (9); **Owen Cooper** (149 lbs), 8-0 (3), w rsc 2 **Eber Tobar** (145 ½ lbs), 8-3-3 (3); **Moses Itauma** (249 ¼ lbs), w ko 1 **Ramon Ibarra** (244lbs), 2-1-1-1 NC (0); **Macauley Owen** (132 1/4lbs), 6-0 (1), w pts 6 **Christian Lopez Flores** (134 ¾ lbs), 14-23-2 (12); **Ben Fail** (158 1/4lbs), 2-0 (1), w ko 6 **Eligio Palacios** (159lbs), 8-66-5 (0); **Ezra Taylor** (178lbs), 5-0 (4), w rsc 2 **Ales Makovec** (174lbs), 4-2 (2); **Natty Ngwenya** (199lbs) 2-0 (0), w pts 4 **Pawel Strykowski** (204 1/4lbs), 3-22-1 (0); **Jimmy Smith** (154lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 MJ **Hall** (153lbs), 3-96-2 (0).

RETURNING FIRE: Baluta rallies after Cain's fast start

HIT MAN: Heaney scores with a stinging right as Flatley advances

SHARP SKILLS: Cunningham dominates Gonzalez [*above*] while Chapman passes big test against Lecca [*below*]

Photos: QUEENSBERRY PROMOTIONS

BENAVIDEZ
WBC
RIVAL
Amigos MEAT

STRONG FINISH: Benavidez has Plant teetering in the closing moments

Photo: ESTHER LIN/SHOWTIME

Benavidez triumphs

Plant is plucky in defeat, Ramirez outlasts Commey and the ageing Sergio Martinez wins a farcical affair, writes **Eric Armit** in his extensive worldwide round-up

MARCH 21
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA
Sergio Martinez, 57-3-2 (32), returned to Argentina for his first fight since outpointing Martin Murray in a WBC middleweight title defence in 2013 and was looking to score an impressive win. What happened instead was a mixture of farce and controversy. His opponent was Colombian **Jhon Teheran**, 18-3 (15), who threw three or four harmless punches and then retreated to the ropes, hiding behind a high guard. Martinez landed a hard left hook to the head that saw Teheran fall to his hands and knees and be counted out. All over in 87 seconds. Teheran then claimed he had been offered $5,000 to lose the fight but later retracted his claim.

MARCH 24
MILAN, ITALY
Italian super-middleweight **Ivan Zucco**, 17-0 (14), continues to improve. He outboxed and outscored Kingston's **Germaine Brown**, 12-2 (3), but was made to work hard for all 10 rounds before winning on scores of 99-91 from the three judges.

MARCH 25
LAS VEGAS, USA
Leading super-middleweight contender **David Benavidez**, 27-0 (23), made a slow start in this WBC final eliminator but swept all of the late rounds to take a unanimous decision over **Caleb Plant**, 22-2 (13).

The bad blood showed in this one as Benavidez and Plant refused to shake hands before the fight. Plant kept his head, however, and boxed cleverly from the start.

He was more mobile, spearing Benavidez with jabs and connecting with left hooks and then tying up his rival inside. Benavidez was off with his timing, lunging with his attacks and just could not pin the circling Plant down.

It was the third before Benavidez had any real success when he finally began to find the target and landed some hefty left hooks. Plant was back in control in the fourth, jabbing quickly and accurately and scoring with left hooks then either sliding away or closing Benavidez down.

After the fourth, two judges had Plant in front 40-36 and 39-37 with the third having them even at 38-38. Benavidez was swinging wildly in the fifth and showed his frustration by signalling for Plant to stand and fight. Plant ignored the gesture and continued to jab and move and took the round which turned out to be his moments of real success. Although the sixth was close, Benavidez noticeably upped his pace and was able to pin Plant against the ropes and land with some power shots.

In the seventh, Benavidez began to put together some hurtful combinations as Plant showed early signs of tiring after the fast pace he had set in the early rounds. Benavidez was now in control and he landed heavily in the eighth with Plant, suddenly in trouble and holding desperately after being rocked by a right to the head.

With Benavidez in full flow the referee

L-MAN
ZUCCO
LEONE
www.fpi.it
SINCE 82

AWAY DAY:
Brown [*left*] gives the improving Zucco plenty to think about

Photo: TIZIANO BALLABIO/ NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

stopped the action to inspect a cut Plant had suffered during a clash of heads earlier in the round and that might have just have saved Plant from a stoppage. The scoring after the eighth still had Plant ahead 77-75 on one card with Benavidez 77-75 up on the second and the third having it 76-76.

Plant was warned for a low punch early in the ninth which was again all Benavidez. The 10th saw Benavidez again pounding Plant with jabs, hooks and uppercuts with Caleb looking close to folding. His corner threatened to pull him out of the fight if they saw he was unable to fight back.

Benavidez handed out more brutal punishment in the 11th, battering Plant, who pluckily saw out the round, with hooks and uppercuts. Although bruised, battered, bloodied and rocked by left hooks in the 12th Plant fought his way to the bell. Benavidez is now the WBC mandatory challenger to Saul Alvarez but world champion Alvarez is already committed to defend his world championship against John Ryder on May 6.

In welterweight bouts **Cody Crowley**, 22-0 (9), and **Chris Colbert**, 17-1 (6), emerged as winners.

In a WBC eliminator Canadian Crowley won a majority decision against **Abel Ramos**, 27-6-2 (21), on scores of 116-112, 115-113 and 114-114 and Colbert outpointed **Jose Valenzuela**, 12-2 (8), with all three judges scoring it 95-94 for Colbert who was floored in the first round and looked lucky to get the decision.

A clash of unbeaten super-welterweights saw **Jesus Ramos**, 20-0 (16), drop **Joey Spencer**, 16-1 (10), in the first round and score a stoppage win in the seventh. Mexican super-bantamweight hope **Kevin Gonzalez**, 26-0-1 (13), remained unbeaten as he registered a

YELLOW PERIL:
Colbert attacks but he's deemed fortunate to edge Ramos

Photo: ESTHER LIN/SHOWTIME

BELTED: Estrada [*right*] wins a second title with victory over Ruppert

Photos: MIKEY WILLIAMS/ TOP RANK

wide unanimous nod over experienced Colombian **Jose Sanmartin**, 34-7-1 (21), on scores of 99-91, 98-92 and 97-93.

FRESNO, USA

In an engrossing super-lightweight duel, **Jose Ramirez**, 28-1 (18), wore down **Richard Commey**, 30-5-1 (27), in the 11th round. Ramirez came roaring out of the blocks looking to blow Commey away in the first round. He was firing hooks and uppercuts and as he pinned Commey in a corner it looked as though Ramirez might get a quick finish. Commey was shaken but he refused to cave in under the pressure and his hard, accurate counters bought him some punching room.

Ramirez continued to press hard, connecting with hooks and uppercuts to head and body and outscoring Commey. The Ghanaian did have some success with his jab and was scoring with hard right hand counters, forcing Ramirez to dial back his aggression. The going was tough for both as they stood centre ring and swapped punches but Commey seemed to be tiring by the end of the ninth.

Sensing that, Ramirez picked up the pace again in the 10th with Commey leaning on and holding at the bell. A right to the side of the head sent Commey sprawling on the canvas early in the 11th. He made it to his feet but looked exhausted and he stumbled into Ramirez as he went forward with Ramirez throwing him into the ropes and almost out of the ring. Ramirez was warned for that but he then pinned Commey against the ropes and bombarded him with punches until Commey ducked out of the firing line after taking a left to the body. The referee counted out Commey as he signalled enough was enough while on one knee.

In a strawweight title fight **Seniesa Estrada**, 24-0 (10), retained her WBA version of the title and won the WBC belt with a unanimous decision over **Tina Ruppert**, 12-1-1 (3), on scores of 100-90 on the three cards. Estrada was a good winner but the scores were no indication of how hard Estrada had to fight for the win. At super-lightweight **Raymond Muratalla**, 17-0 (14), was on the floor in the first round but battled back to drop **Humberto Galindo**, 14-3-1 (11), in the fourth and finish him with a body punch in the ninth.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The Commonwealth heavyweight title remains vacant after the fight between **Kris Terzievski**, 11-1-2 (8), and **Faiga Opelu**, 15-3-1 (11), ended in a technical draw. After two fairly even rounds, Opelu drove forward in the third and they both overbalanced and went down. Terzievski injured his left ankle and was unable to continue. **BN**

SWARMING: Ramirez is too accurate for Commey

CRISIS AVERTED

Lyndon gets the job done against late substitute, writes **Daniel Etchells**

BOLTON

MARCH 24

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

★★★☆☆ ATMOSPHERE

IT WASN'T the fight **Lyndon Arthur** wanted nor prepared for, but he ultimately got the job done to remain firmly in the mix in a thriving light-heavyweight division. A late change of opponent following a failed pre-fight medical for Argentina's Braian Nahuel Suarez denied Arthur a chance to claim the vacant IBO bauble at the University of Bolton Stadium.

But the 31-year-old overcame that setback to see off a tricky replacement in the shape of former sparring partner **Boris Crighton,** winning by unanimous decision atop the Wasserman Boxing card.

Crighton, a two-time GB amateur champion from Aberdeen who usually competes at super-middleweight, was called up at a day's notice and performed admirably on the night.

The "Blade" landed a big right hand in the third round as Arthur struggled to find his rhythm in the early exchanges. Rounds four to eight were extremely cagey with Arthur still unable to take full initiative and Crighton subsequently growing in belief he could pull off an upset.

But a big right hand in the ninth marked Arthur's best moment of the fight up until that point, clearly hurting his opponent who was hindered by a cut beneath his left eye.

The pressure continued on Crighton in the final round and he was floored seconds before the final bell, which had sounded well before referee Howard Foster had finished his count.

It added extra gloss to the judges' scorecards as Arthur, who is now expected to fight again in May, prevailed 98-92, 96-93, 99-91.

Prior to the main event, Wigan's **James Moorcroft** secured an English welterweight title shot after defeating Liverpool's **Nathan Bennett** by knockout in the second of their scheduled 10-round final eliminator.

Bennett beat Darren Sarginson's count having been dropped by a right uppercut-left hook combination, but the referee stopped the fight with 2-25 gone.

In arguably the fight of the evening, Beswick's **Kane Gardner** came through a superb eight-round scrap with Wolverhampton's **Conah Walker** to make it four consecutive victories and move into title contention.

Walker was firmly on the front foot early on, but Gardner weathered the storm and cleverly managed the contest thereafter on his way to winning 78-76 for Mr Sarginson.

Photo: LEIGH DAWNEY/WASSERMAN BOXING

WORTHY WINNER: Arthur gets his hand raised after 10 rounds

A number of fighters extended perfect records on the night, including Kazakhstan's **Sultan Zaurbek** and Denmark's **Oliver Zaren**.

Zaurbek earned a 10th knockout win of his career to move to 14-0, sealing victory over Argentina's **Reuquen Cona Facundo Arce** with a stinging body shot in an eight-rounder. Arce beat Mr Sarginson's count, but the contest was rightly waved off after 1-44 of round five.

Another international star, Zaren, marked his UK debut with an assured 40-36 win over Croatia's **Frane Radnic** for Mr Foster.

The highly-rated middleweight southpaw, trained by the legendary Mikkel Kessler, was dominant from start to finish and now has eight victories to his name.

Also making his UK debut was German middleweight **Denis Radovan**, who beat France's **Fouad El Massoudi** by technical decision in an eight-rounder.

An accidental clash of heads caused a nasty cut to El Massoudi's left eye, and Mr Sarginson called the fight off on the advice of the ringside doctor after 1-45 of round five.

Among the local fighters preserving unblemished records was Stockport's **Niall Brown**, scoring a heavy knockdown in the third of six rounds on his way to beating Manchester-based Iranian **Bahadur Karami**. Brown had to dig deep in an entertaining encounter, but he was well worthy of Mr Foster's 59-55 decision to move to 8-0.

Mr Foster also officiated as Salford's **Alex Murphy** and Manchester's **Bobby Faulkner** both claimed shutout wins in four-rounders.

Murphy beat Manchester's **Liam Fox** to move to 7-0, while Faulkner defeated Bulgaria's **Georgi Velichkov** to move to 5-0.

The last fight of the evening saw formidable flyweight **Chloe Watson** move to 5-0 with a points win over Argentina's **Romina Gisel Sosa**.

Watson, from Birkenhead and trained by Ricky Hatton, always looked in control as she took a 39-37 victory on Mr Foster's scorecard.

In the other women's bout, Norway's **Katharina Thanderz** made it three wins on the bounce since losing to Terri Harper for a super-featherweight belt in November 2020.

Now competing at lightweight, Thanderz knocked down previously unbeaten Romanian **Ioana Fecioru** in the first round en route to edging a gruelling contest 77-75 on Mr Sarginson's scorecard.

There was also a professional debut win for Manchester's **Ashley Marron**, who had his hand raised by Mr Sarginson at the end of the first of four scheduled rounds due to a cut to opponent **Daryl Pearce** of Birmingham.

THE VERDICT **Arthur doesn't let late change of opponent faze him.**

FULL RESULTS

Lyndon Arthur (182lbs 9oz), 22-1 (15), w pts 10 **Boris Crighton** (179lbs 6oz), 10-2 (7); **James Moorcroft** (146lbs 6oz), 19-2 (7), w ko 2 **Nathan Bennett** (146lbs 2oz), 12-4 (2); **Kane Gardner** (140lbs 5oz), 16-2 (7) w pts 8 **Conah Walker** (141lbs 8oz), 11-2-1 (3); **Sultan Zaurbek** (133lbs 3oz), 14-0 (10), w rsf 5 **Reuquen Cona Facundo Arce** (131lbs 9oz), 15-10-2 (7); **Oliver Zaren** (166lbs 9oz), 8-0 (2), w pts 4 **Frane Radnic** (168lbs 9oz), 11-38 (10); **Denis Radovan** (161lbs 1oz), 17-0-1 (8), w td 5 **Fouad El Massoudi** (162lbs), 18-20-1 (2); **Niall Brown** (160lbs 7oz), 8-0 (3), w pts 6 **Bahadur Karami** (161lbs 4oz), 1-5-1 (1); **Alex Murphy** (143lbs 1oz), 7-0, w pts 4 **Liam Fox** (142lbs 4oz), 0-7; **Bobby Faulkner** (143lbs 8oz), 5-0, w pts 4 **Georgi Velichkov** (143lbs 4oz), 3-11 (3); **Chloe Watson** (113lbs 5oz), 5-0, w pts 4 **Romina Gisel Sosa** (110lbs 5oz), 3-2-4; **Katharina Thanderz** (139lbs 7oz), 16-1 (2), w pts 8 **Ioana Fecioru** (140lbs 6oz), 4-1 (2); **Ashley Marron** (149lbs 2oz), 1-0 (1), rtd 1 **Daryl Pearce** (150lbs 3oz), 1-17.

SO LONG FOR NOW

Poochi wins his last bout ahead of his upcoming debut as a referee, writes **Gareth Jones**

BRISTOL

MARCH 25

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

LOCAL favourite **Aaron Sutton** needed a strong finish to retain his Southern Area middleweight title in the face of a solid challenge by **Liam Wells**, from Rainham.

Sutton, now 16-0, is setting set his sights on the English throne, currently held by Tyler Denny, although manager Chris Sanigar believes the Bognor Regis southpaw might vacate in the hunt for higher honours.

Aaron dictated the action with his accurate jab, but Wells never stopped trying. Indeed, only a big last round clinched a 96-94 verdict from referee Lee Every, who lived up to his name and handled all nine bouts on the night.

Sutton had to share the spotlight with Lydney journeyman **Lewis van Poetsch**, in his 170th and final appearance as an active boxer. 'Poochi', who will be back in the ring as a referee – presumably without the clowning - had more than 100 supporters, including a drummer, to bid him farewell and enjoyed himself with a 39-37 four-threes win over Aberdare trier **Steve Davies**.

"After a hectic and very emotional weekend I finally draw the final curtain on my boxing career," van Poetsch said on Monday. "My final fight was amazing. The atmosphere and love I received was extremely heart-warming.

"A massive thank you to my parents and my sister who have been supportive since the first time I put on a pair of gloves when I was 14 years old, checking when I was boxing all over the country for the last 10 years and making sure I was always okay after my fights.

"And of course, a very huge thank you and massive love to my righthand man since my third fight, Richard Farnan. Since then, he's looked after me inside the ring and out. From cuts in the corner to driving me around the country, dealing with matchmakers and promoters, to wrapping my hands. I wouldn't have wanted to do it with anyone else my man!"

As we reported in *BN* several weeks ago, Poochi passed his referee assessment with the British Boxing Board of Control. He is expected to make his debut as a trialist on the Anthony Joshua-Jermaine Franklin undercard this weekend.

A quartet of six-threes all went the course, with unbeaten fighters taking the spoils. Taunton's **Pawel August** shook off some ring rust with a 59-55 victory over Ukrainian **Serhii Ksendzov**, while an all-southpaw showdown saw Bristolian **Anton Haskins** stroll to a 60-54 shutout over substitute **Lee Hallett**, from Canning Town.

Connor Gray, from Calne in Wiltshire, floored Chichester-based Zambian **Mwenya Chisanga** in the last to make sure of his 58-55 success, while Porthcawl's **James Atkins**, in his first outing over six, took every round over Russian **Rustem Fatkhullin**.

Two other Welshmen crossed the Bridge to have their arms raised in four-rounders. Swansea crowd-pleaser **Moses Jolly** impressed again, catching up with tough Brummie **Joel Ducille** to force Mr Every's intervention at 1-59 of the last, while **Tom James**, from Pontypridd, prevailed by 39-37 over veteran **Fonz Alexander** in the Newark man's 150th fight. **Logan Dorrington**, son of popular former pro Darren, made it two stoppages out of two, with a right hand discombobulating Nottingham-based Sicilian **Thomas Akyire** sufficiently for Mr Every to halt the planned four at 2-16 of the second.

***THE VERDICT* Sutton maintains his steady progress, but the night belonged to 'Poochi'. One of the game's great entertainers.**

FULL RESULTS

Aaron Sutton (158 1/2lbs), 16-0 (3), w pts 10 **Liam Wells** (158 1/2lbs), 9-3 (2); **Pawel August** (171lbs), 16-0 (7), w pts 6 **Serhii Ksendzov** (170lbs), 4-13 (2); **Anton Haskins** (140lbs), 7-0 (1), w pts 6 **Lee Hallett** (143lbs), 1-59-3; **Connor Gray** (145lbs), 8-0 (1), w pts 6 **Mwenya Chisanga** (144lbs), 2-12-1; **James Atkins** (143lbs), 4-0, w pts 6 **Rustem Fatkhullin** (145lbs), 8-57 (3); **Lewis van Poetsch** (180lbs), 14-152-4 (4), w pts 4 **Steve Davies** (177lbs), 0-4; **Moses Jolly** (231lbs), 4-0 (3), w rsf 4 **Joel Ducille** (230lbs), 1-3-1; **Tom James** (145lbs), 4-0, w pts 4 **Fonz Alexander** (149lbs), 8-141-1 (4); **Logan Dorrington** (146lbs), 2-0 (2), w rsf 2 **Thomas Akyire** (147lbs), 0-2.

Photo: SANIGAR EVENTS

GREAT ENTERTAINER: The one and only van Poetsch signs off with a victory

Upset at The Plaza

Charlie Tymon is ringside as Casey comes unstuck against Nicaraguan

GLASGOW

MARCH 24

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

THIS Kynoch promotion had the production of a larger event and maintained that feel, with the opposition stiffening as the bill progressed.

Top of the bill was Plean's **John Casey** against Nicaragua's **Greyvin Mendoza**, whose record suggested a stern test for the home fighter. Casey pushed the action in the first and that pattern continued into the second until, suddenly, following yet another flurry from Casey, the Nicaraguan screamed a war cry and went straight after the Scot with a barrage of concussive blows, scoring a heavy knockdown. Up, but on unsteady legs, Casey took more punishment before going to his knees. Referee Kevin McIntyre had a long look this time before allowing him to continue. Mendoza then unloaded until Casey went down for the third and final time, the referee calling a stop at 1-38. Although shortly back up to the relief and applause of all in attendance this could prove quite a setback for Casey.

Nicaragua's **Bryan Castro** took the opening round clearly against **Chris Liddell** of Blackwood, utilising his long levers from the back foot and scoring with lefts to the body as the Scot marched forward. Castro was breathing hard by the interval however, which did not bode well for him as Liddell spent the remaining rounds in pursuit, scoring repeatedly with hooks and finishing a worthy 59-55 winner. McIntyre refereed.

Naeem Ali of Blackburn provided Cockermouth's **Alfie Pool** with a valuable workout in the next bout and persevered in every round, but Pool maintained a high workrate and delivered fast-handed attacks from body to head throughout, with Mr Maxwell scoring 40-36.

Ayr's **David Burrell** took every round with ease in the opener against Hull's **Luke Fash**, referee Darren Maxwell awarding a 40-36 verdict. Burrell has obvious ability, but tougher tests are required.

FULL RESULTS

Greyvin Mendoza (139lbs) 7-2 (5), w rsf 2 **John Casey** (140 lbs), 2-1; **David Burrell** (121 lbs), 2-0, w pts 4 **Luke Fash** (125lbs) 3-89-3; **Alfie Pool** (144lbs), 4-0 (1), w pts 6 **Naeem Ali** (149 lbs), 2-103-1 (1); **Chris Liddell** (113 lbs) 5-1, w pts 6 **Bryan Castro** (115 lbs), 2-3-1 (1).

INAUGURAL CHAMP: Dolan celebrates getting her name in the record books

DOLAN MAKES HISTORY

David Wainwright watches the first female Commonwealth super-flyweight champ crowned

NEWARK

MARCH 25

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

NEWARK'S **Emma Dolan** made history by becoming the first ever female Commonwealth super-flyweight champion with a unanimous points win over Tanzanian **Halima Vunjabei** at a packed Newark Showground.

In a thrilling contest, both fighters started at a fast pace as both sought to gain the edge in a cagey first round. Dolan was dominating the second but was stunned by a big left hand from Vunjabei towards the end of the round, where she appeared to rest her head briefly on the Tanzanian's shoulder.

Fully recovered for the third, Dolan carried on catching her opponent with some heavy left hands but Vunjabei kept coming forward during the middle rounds and was always a threat.

There was concern from the Tanzanian's corner when Dolan started to catch her with some hurtful combinations which resulted in Vunjabei's right eye starting to swell up from round eight. Dolan didn't have it all her own way, however.

The final round saw both fighters go toe-to-toe as they both looked for the KO. Vunjabei just about managed to hear the final bell.

Dolan, who moved from her hometown of Norwich last year so she could be trained by Carl Greaves, promoting his 150th show, will feel vindicated by scorecards of 98-92, 97-93 and 97-94 by Kevin Parker, Kevin McIntyre and Phil Edwards respectively.

Scunthorpe's **James Richardson** didn't have it all his own way against 121-fight veteran **Jordan Grannum**, as he prevailed 60-55 on referee Kevin Parker's scorecard.

Newark's **Connor Meanwell** returned to winning ways with a tight 39-38 win over **Dale Arrowsmith** on Mr McIntyre's scorecard.

There were also shut-out victories for Newark's **Tom Cowling**, Boston's **Tom Pogson** and Lincoln's **Jamie Behan** over Rotherham's **Martin Shaw**, Middleton's **Darryl Sharp** and Rochdale's **Richard Helm**, respectively.

FULL RESULTS

Emma Dolan (114lbs 3oz), 5-0 (1), w pts 10 **Halima Vunjabei** (114lbs 2oz), 11-10-1 (7); **James Richardson** (158lbs), 5-0, w pts 6 **Jordan Grannum** (164lbs), 8-109-4; **Tom Cowling** (168lbs), 10-0 (3), w pts 4 **Martin Shaw** (164lbs), 3-13-3 (1); **Tom Pogson** (200lbs), 2-0, w pts 4 **Darryl Sharp** (185lbs), 7-103-1 (1); **Connor Meanwell** (157lbs), 2-1, w pts 4 **Dale Arrowsmith** (155lbs), 5-75-3 (1); **Jamie Behan** (158lbs), 2-0, w pts 4 **Richard Helm** (160lbs), 1-14-1 (1).

Ballazhi wins bow

But has to get off the floor, writes **Simon Euan-Smith** at ringside

KENTISH TOWN

MARCH 25

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

POPULAR **Dennis Ballazhi** delighted his Albanian fans and made a winning pro debut, outscoring Romania's **Octavian Gratii** at the O2 Forum.

Ballazhi's one awkward moment came in the second, when a right counter put him down. He was up quickly, and opened up with both hands once referee Sean McAvoy (officiating throughout) had completed the eight-count. Gratii went on the move and countered when he could.

Gratii had come to fight, as he had against Saqib Khan at Brentwood eight days earlier. He moved well, presenting an awkward, side-on target and he marked Bellazhi below the left eye in the third. But Bellazhi (now based in East Finchley) consistently outworked him, scoring well with solid digs to the body (one had Gratii claiming a low blow in the last, and he was given time to recover). Referee McAvoy scored the six-rounder 58-55.

Three four-rounders completed this Boxing Management London bill, all scored 40-36 to the house fighter.

Another Albanian debutant, Uxbridge-based **Ergal Elejaz**, triumphed against Blackpool's **Jake Darnell,** who was outweighed by just over two stone and looked small beside his rival. Both in fact carried surplus around the waist. Elezaj picked his shots effectively and Darnell frequently held on – but Elezaj did occasionally leave himself, and when there was an opening Darnell exploited it.

Southpaw **Frankie Storey** (Luton) made it five straight wins with a clear victory over Westbrook's **Ricky Leach**. Storey stamped his authority from the outset, showing fast hands and landing freely to head and body.

Watford's **Brandon Lewis** also maintained his 100 per cent record, moving to 3-0 with a win over Southwark-based Italian **Victor Edagha**. This got messy at times, with Edagha wrestled over in the first and second sessions. The effective work always came from Lewis, however.

FULL RESULTS

Dennis Ballazhi (149½lbs), 1-0, w pts 6 **Octavian Gratii** (152lbs), 8-37-3 (4); **Ergal Elezaj** (283lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 **Jake Darnell** (254¼lbs), 1-16; **Brandon Lewis** (172lbs), 3-0, w pts 4 **Victor Edagha** (173lbs 6oz), 2-75-3 (1); **Frankie Storey** (138bs), 5-0, w pts 4 **Ricky Leach** (144lbs 2oz), 3-64-1.

NICE WORKOUT: Udofia and Chapman embarce in the bowels of York Hall

CAMDEN
LINUS

RUST REMOVAL

Udofia wins clearly on ring return, writes **Daniel Herbert** from ringside

BETHNAL GREEN

MARCH 25

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

TEN months after losing a split decision to Denzel Bentley for the British middleweight title, **Linus Udofia** returned to action with a six-rounder on the Goodwin Boxing show at York Hall.

Scaling 2lbs over the super-middle limit, Luton's Udofia shed some rust and pleased his fans as he outpointed reliable **Robbie Chapman** (Chalk Farm) 59-55 for the evening's referee Kieran McCann.

Chapman scooted around the ring and landed some jabs, although his biggest success was a left hook in the fourth – perhaps the round McCann gave him. But Udofia's left-hand work, in the form of jabs and hooks, kept him in firm control.

Another super-middle six saw Dunmow southpaw **William Webber** given a decent fight by **Pavol Garaj** while landing enough left crosses to hold off the ambitious Slovakian 58-56 for Mr McCann.

Fight of the night, indeed one of the best prelims seen for a long while, was the light-heavyweight four-rounder that matched unbeatens in **Timon Douglin** and **Rob Parry**.

Reading's Douglin looked set for an early night when he dropped Parry twice in the opening minute – first from a right, then from a left hook. But Parry (Manchester) battled back to sting rampaging Douglin a few times and even survive being hurt badly in the closing seconds to hear the final bell, where Douglin triumphed 40-34.

Swindon's experienced **Phil Williams** spoiled the debut of **Darren Sealy** by outhustling the huge Croydon man in a heavyweight four. Sealy didn't get going until the last, and lost 39-37.

Two other fours produced 40-36 wins for **Albano Junior Speshal** and **Mike Murphy**.

Luton super-lightweight Albano was rocked by a left hook late in round two but otherwise used fast hands to outscore gritty **Kasey Bradnum** (Harwich), while Grays middleweight Murphy jabbed his way to victory over Manchester's evasive **Josh Cook**.

FULL RESULTS

Linus Udofia (170lbs), 18-1 (9), w pts 6 **Robbie Chapman** (169 1/2lbs), 11-28-3 (2); **William Webber** (167lbs), 11-1 (1), w pts 6 **Pavol Garaj** (170lbs), 7-39-4 (3); **Timon Douglin** (184lbs), 3-0, w pts 4 **Rob Parry** (179lbs), 2-1; **Albano Junior Speshal** (142lbs), 3-0, w pts 4 **Kasey Bradnum** (147lbs), 1-5; **Mike Murphy** (160lbs), 1-1, w pts 4 **Josh Cook** (165lbs), 0-25-2; **Phil Williams** (260lbs), 6-41-1 (1), w pts 4 **Darren Sealy** (263lbs), 0-1.

Cooper still Super

Hampshire man returns impressively after three years out, writes **Will Hale**

SOUTHSEA

MARCH 25

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

TOTTON's **Jimmy 'Super' Cooper** put on a pleasing display of skill while taking every round against Spain-based Mexican **Fernando Valencia** in topping a Chris Hitching-promoted evening of five bouts over four-threes at Southsea's South Parade Pier.

Cooper, coming back after a 36-month hiatus, boxed well off the jab and slotted home correct and sharp punches. Jimmy's footwork was accomplished and his defensive head movement kept him firmly out of trouble against the fit and aggressive visitor. The home fighter swelled in confidence over the last two stanzas and he picked some crisp left hooks and straight right hands to add an exclamation mark to his win.

Southampton's **Valantin Marku** had a night to forget when Spain's **Alejandro Torres** forced the show's third man Mark Bates to rescue him after 1-20 of the opener. A big right hand had Marku in trouble after around half a minute and although he maintained his stance, he looked glazed and hurt. After a further series of thumping rights, Bates right called the affair off with Florian seemingly about to take a hammering.

Dagenham's **Karim Argius** was held to a 38-38 point draw by tough Mexican **Hector Lozano**. The switch-hitting Londoner was perhaps guilty of loading up too much over the first two sessions. Hector hurled wide shots and had some success downstairs.

Bognor's **Billy Castle** scored a 39-36 win over **Reynaldo Cajina** to kickstart his paid career. Two right hands around the guard had Cajina down in the first, but the heavy-hooking Spaniard survived despite taking some weighty right hands and left hooks.

Likewise, Chichester debutant **Thomas Johnson** won his paid bow in shutting out Derbyshire's **Nathan Junor**. After Johnson settled into the fight, he scored with some decent body attacks and straight shots upstairs to leave Junor in survival mode by the last.

FULL RESULTS

Jimmy Cooper (156lbs), 10-1-1 (1), w pts 4 **Fernando Valencia** (159lbs), 9-45-5 (5); **Alejandro Torres** (112lbs), 3-16 (3), w rsf 1 **Valantin Marku** (112lbs) 1-1; **Kerim Argius** (124lbs), 1-0-1, d pts 4 **Hector Lozano** (127lbs), 1-2-1 (1); **Billy Castle** (140lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 **Reynaldo Cajina** (137lbs), 15-77-5 (11); **Tommy Johnson** (180lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 **Nathan Junor** (180lbs), 3-16-1 (2).

D'animal tamed

Serge silences the locals as he upsets a former British title challenger

EDGBASTON

MARCH 24

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

JUST seven days after going at Dudley Town Hall Black Country Boxing Promotions were back in the familiar surrounds of Edgbaston's H Suite where five bouts went ahead in front of an appreciative crowd.

You never quite know which version of Cameroonian **Serge Ambomo** might show up but former British title challenger **Andrew Robinson** to his dismay found the Sheffield-based puncher in combative mode and duly fell to a 37-39 loss in a bout refereed by trialist Ryan Churchill and scored by Kevin Parker, a combination which operated throughout.

The Redditch puncher, now 38, had been tagged by a couple of looping early rights before being backed into a corner and rocked in the second. There was worse to come late in the next when a short right dropped him to one knee. Robinson needed something special in the last if he was going to retrieve the situation and though he did enjoy a better session it proved a case of too little, too late.

Brummie **Tommy Collins** always brings a decent following and they were on hand once more to witness him taking an eighth successive scalp. He didn't have things all his own way, however, going down after walking onto one from Nicaraguan **Eduardo Valverde** with around a minute of the opener remaining and coming under fire again at the end of the fifth. Thankfully for him, he was sufficiently in control of what remained, fast hands and a busy jab seeing him home 58-56 in what proved an enjoyable scrap.

Wins too for Birmingham pair **Connor Goodchild** and **Jarrett Doherty**. Super-welter Goodchild triumphed 40-37 over Bulgarian **Petar Aleksandrov** who after losing out over four rounds at Dudley had obviously hung around for a week taking in the local sights. Meanwhile, middleweight Jarrett, looking sharp in a six, proved too much for Russian **Vasif Mamedov** who, trailing by a distance having been floored by a right cross in the third, barely engaged until the last. Mr Parker had it 60-53.

FULL RESULTS

Lewis Morris (135lbs 10oz), 6-0, w pts 6 **Liam Richards** (137lbs 6oz), 12-86 (1); **Jarrett Doherty** (164½lbs), 4-2, w pts 6 **Vasif Mamedov** (165lbs 6oz), 3-35-3; **Tommy Collins** (143lbs 6oz), 8-0 (1), w pts 6 **Eduardo Valverde** (137lbs 5oz), 3-10-1 (1); **Serge Ambomo** (162lbs 10oz), 10-42-3 (4), w pts 4 **Andrew Robinson** (169lbs 14oz), 28-7-2 (8); **Connor Goodchild** (150lbs 9oz), 4-0 (1), w pts 4 **Petar Aleksandrov** (151lbs), 4-27-1 (2).

McHale storm

Elvis lover McHale punishes Jackson, writes **Allen Payne** from ringside

GLASGOW

MARCH 23

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

"IF you are looking for trouble, you came to the right place..." sounded through the packed Radisson Blu hall as **Matt McHale** entered the ring for the main event in his all-white Elvis inspired ringwear. His opponent, **Stephen Jackson**, may have wished he'd gone to a different place on Thursday night with the punishment he endured in the following 18 minutes of boxing.

The Edinburgh boxer had no time for conversation, only action, as he shot out at the opening bell to unleash a relentless assault on his opponent. He retained that blistering pace, mixing his combinations and shots to the body at every opportunity, leaving the Englishman in trouble. A well-placed hook to the ribs at the end of the fifth appeared to hurt the brave journeyman, but the bell saved him. The Lancashire battler didn't go down or give up and Kevin McIntyre delivered his final call for the night, a landslide 60-54 win for the Commonwealth Games bronze medallist.

Ryan Carlin's nature inspired his 'The Quiet Man' nickname, however his huge support certainly cranked up the noise to compensate. The Motherwell boxer was hoping to let his hands do the talking, however the almost comical size difference and awkward style of his Birmingham opponent, **Reiss Taylor,** made that tricky. Carlin was patient, picking his shots nicely to secure a 40-37 point's win.

Despite not fighting for over a year, there were no signs of ring rust as **Callen McAulay** faced off against **Mykhailo Sovtus**. The Ukrainian often provides a decent test for prospects but the Paisley boxer controlled the contest without any trouble. The Scottish southpaw displayed fantastic movement, delivering neck-bending shots but the hard-headed opponent would see the final bell and Callen picked up the shutout victory.

FULL RESULTS

Matt McHale (117lbs), 2-0 (1), w pts 6 **Stephen Jackson** (118lbs), 1-31-1; **Ryan Carlin** (117lbs), 2-0, w pts 4, **Reiss Taylor** (118lbs), 3-21 (1); **Callen McAulay** (152lbs), 10-0 (2), w pts 6, **Mykhailo Sovtus** (150lbs), 5-18 (2).

AMATEUR SCENE

The very best action, previews and news from Olympic-style boxing

SEND us your club's news, results or upcoming events to **bn.ed@kelsey.co.uk** or **01959 541 444**

George returns to form

DENAEO GEORGE was a European champion whose skills had more than 100,000 views – and then he disappeared.

"People were wondering what happened to me," said the 17-year-old from City of Leicester Lightning ABC, "and now I'm back."

The 2019 European Schoolboy champion has been named in England's squad for the forthcoming European Youth Championship in Armenia (April 23-May 4).

George heads there in confident mood having beaten last year's European Youth champion **Owen Ketley** in the final of the Youth Championships last month.

George also beat Ketley in the 2019 National Schools final – before he took a break.

Denaeo named in the England squad for European Youth Championships

That was idea of his father, and coach, Emerson George.

He withdrew the teenager from championships after a semi-final loss to **Thomas Varey** in the last four of the Junior Championships in Hereford in October, 2021.

Emerson said: "We took a break from competing at championship level.

"We had a year out to work on a few things. We went on club bouts to see the improvements and when we were happy we went for it again."

Denaeo said: "I needed to get more comfortable in mid-range, instead of being on the outside. I like to keep it long and I needed to work on my bent-arm shots."

Emerson knows his son better than anyone – and he knows boxing as well.

He was a fighter himself, winning 17 of 22 bouts with Belgrave ABC during a golden era for the Leicester club.

The late Jez Brogan had champions Neil Linford, Martin Concepcion, Jason and Paul Squire, Jeff Guest and more in the Checketts Road gym.

Emerson regularly sparred Concepcion and was known as a puncher.

Billy Wright took over from Brogan at the Leicester gym and Emerson said: "Billy said his wife was always glad when I was on the show because it meant he would be home early!"

Emerson's career peaked with a run to the semi-finals of the Junior ABA Championships and says Denaeo was only three years old when he first took him to the gym.

Photo: ENGLAND BOXING

BACK IN 2021: A memorable bout between Thomas Varey [*right*] and Denaeo George

STING
FBT
ENG
VAREY
THINK SPEAK
RESPECT

“Denaeo has been taught the right way,” he said. “He had the jab and footwork before others his age. Some of them caught up with him in technique, but Denaeo has drive and talent as well. He has these fast hands. People say he’s silky smooth and he boxes like a Cuban.”

Those skills have been admired by more than 100,000 on social media.

George posted a clip of him leaving an opponent punching shadows and wondering where he is as he slips and slides around him. Those skills were only seen on club shows for around a year as Emerson withdrew his son from championships. George boxed only three times – winning all unanimously – before re-entering the Youth Championships this season.

Emerson said: “Because he hadn’t boxed at top level for so long, he was a bit nervous. But I knew if he performed like he can, he would have no problem.”

Father and son agree the semi-final against West Ham southpaw **Connor Mitchell** was tight before victory over Ketley in the final confirmed George is back to his best.

That was followed by what *Boxing News* described as an “outstanding” performance for England against Wales in Cardiff.

Gareth Jones said George was the pick of the boxers in his country’s 7-5 win. He handed Joe Williams two counts on the way to a unanimous points win, Emerson saying: “He wanted to impress at the top level.”

Next is the European Youth Championships in Armenia and George heads there believing he can strike gold.

“It gives me confidence knowing I won the European Schools title,” said George, who is also trained by Chris Slatcher and Elvis Hopkins. “If I did it before, why can’t I do it again? The gold medal is the target again.”

ENGLAND SQUAD

Female: Under 48kg – Ebony Jones (Scunthorpe); Under 50kg – Alice Pumphrey (The Purge), Dionne Mannion (Marden, reserve); Under 52kg – Lauren Mackie (Burton Park and GB), Keira Bowden (Redcar, reserve); Under 60kg – Monae Smith (Jennings Gym); Under 63kg – Madison Adkins (Stratford Upon Avon); Under 66kg – Amy Nolan (Right Stuff); Under 81kg – Amber Moss-Birch (Golden Ring and GB). Male: Under 48kg – John Tom Varey (Box Smart Elite), Mikie Tallon (Lee Jones, reserve); Under 51kg – Joe Turner (Jennings Gym), Zayn Ahmed (Pinewood, reserve); Under 54kg – Owen Ketley (Lionheart and GB), Leighton Birchall (Jennings Gym, reserve); Under 57kg – Denaeo George (City of Leicester Lightning); Under 67kg – Ellis Panter(Burton Park); Under 75kg – Emmanuel Buttigieg (Newham).

ALL-ACTION: Nathan Williams and Crimea Varey do battle in Wigan

STARS OF THE FUTURE

A total of 55 new champions are crowned at the National Junior Championships in Wigan

THE high quality of the country’s junior boxing was underlined last weekend (March 25 and 26), as a total of 55 new national champions were crowned at the England Boxing National Junior Championships 2023.

At least one club from each of the 11 regions won a national title, which was boxed at Robin Park Sports and Tennis Centre, in Wigan.

London-based Repton were the only club to win three times, with Tommy Coyle, Rotunda, District Youth, Worcester City and Mikey’s all claiming two titles each, and 48 different clubs boasting a victorious boxer.

Regionally, the Midlands boasted the most title wins with 11, followed by Tyne, Tees and Wear (nine), North West (seven), London (six), Merseyside & Cheshire (five), Yorkshire and Home Counties (both four), Southern Counties and Western Counties (both three), Eastern Counties (two) and East Midlands (one).

Open Class champions were rewarded with a championship belt, while Cadet boxers received a gold medal. Finalists from both classes picked up a silver medal and losing semi-finalists a bronze medal.

“It was great to see such a large crowd in attendance for the England Boxing National Junior Championships 2023 in Wigan, where they were treated to two fantastic days of boxing”, said outgoing England Boxing Competitions and Events manager, Mick Maguire.

“We would like to thank all boxers, coaches, officials, staff, and volunteers for their contribution towards an all-round successful weekend.

“Finally, congratulations to all boxers involved in this weekend’s Championship. The standard of competition was at a very high level and all individuals should be proud of their achievements.”

The championships were open to spectators and streamed live on YouTube.

Female boxers of the tournament, as selected by the onlooking England Boxing Performance Pathway coaches, were Rhianna Doforo (Cadet, No Limits, Under 60kg) and Hollie Haskins (Open, Broadplain, Under 50kg).

Male boxers of the tournament were George Francis (Cadet, Repton, Under 44kg) and Mohammed Safari (Open, The Ring, Under 50kg).

The female bouts of the tournament were Sophia Fagan (Wildstar) v Vienna Barry (Boston ABC) at Under 66kg in the Cadet category and Caitlyn Wise (Worcester City) v Rosanna Bycroft (Legions) at Under 52kg in the Open Class.

The male bouts of the tournament were Sahd Iqbal (Laisterdyke) v Morris James (Berinsfield) at Under 66kg in the Cadet category and Harvey Turner (Phoenix Fire) and Tobias Taylor (New Saints) at Under 80kg in the Open Class.

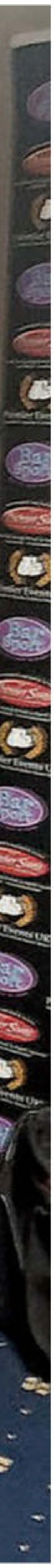
STAR BOXER: Repton’s George Francis

MARCHING ON: Ledwidge [*left*] now has two wins over Josh Martin

CTK
STOKE STAFFS
combat trophies .com
STOKE STAFFS BOXING TEAM

NAC Champs taking shape

One more round to go this weekend before the quarter-finals begin next month



THE pre quarter-finals of the NAC Championships are held in Barnsley on Saturday. The action will all be screened on England Boxing's YouTube channel from 12 noon as boxers bid to secure their place in the last eight. The quarter and semi-finals will be held on April 15 and 16 in Rotherham and the finals are in Manchester on Saturday, April 22.

Tommy Ledwidge (Christ the King) heads to Barnsley this weekend to compete at 80kgs against **Muhammad Anees Iqbal** (Pound 4 Pound) after winning the Midlands final in Cannock on Sunday.

The 22-year-old Ledwidge beat **Josh Martin** (Stoke Staffs) in the Midlands final of the Development championship last season on the way to winning the title – and won unanimously when they met again in the Premier Suite at Bar Sport, his second win in three clashes with Martin.

Ledwidge made sure of the points decision with a strong finish. He handed Martin a count in the last, the referee stepping in after a pinpoint left hook-right straightened him up.

Ledwidge landed a couple more clean shots in the dying seconds to make sure of victory in the pick of the Midlands finals. Clubmate **Huey Malone**, an impressive winner for England in Germany last month, is the No.1 seed at 67kgs. Malone won the NACs last season and will enter at the quarter-final stage in Rotherham. Baker Street southpaw **Anton Esson** will be looking to join Malone in the last eight at 67kgs this weekend, when he faces **William Tyers** of Billingham on Saturday (April 1). Esson won his sixth Western Counties title by outpointing **Alfie Woods** (Christchurch) unanimously in Torrington.

Woods used the ring well for the opening couple of minutes, but once he held his feet, he found himself in trouble.

Esson shook him with the first clean punches he landed and stayed in charge. He walked into range with his hand high, elbows tucked in and chin down and blocked Woods' punches and fired back with hard counters, down and up.

He finished the second round with a combination of hard shots and hurt Woods with body shots in the last.

Up at super-heavyweight, **Daniel James** (Bakehouse) will be in Barnsley this weekend after making it back-to-back Midlands titles with a unanimous points win over **Matthew Williams** (Sherrington's) in Cannock.

James, the 2019 Development champion, won the Midlands title last season by outpointing Boma Brown and had too much for the teenager in Cannock.

UNANIMOUS: Seam gets the nod over Imhogiemme

BUSY NIGHT IN BALHAM

Well-attended show proves the appetite remains for grass roots boxing, writes **Brooke Streatfield**

ON Saturday March 18, Balham Boxing Club – famously situated in the old park building - played host to an exciting gym show which seemed to really roll back the years. The venue was heaving and is proof that boxing at grass roots level is still alive and kicking within the local community.

Typiically, the show started with five skills bouts, giving the youngsters at local clubs a chance to shine. The three special bouts of the evening at the head of the show were competing for the Balham Challenge belt.

In the first 60kg bout, Eltham's Tommy Smith secured a unanimous decision over Broad Street's Tommy Borg in an exciting rematch. Three weeks previously, at Balham Leisure Centre, Borg secured the victory but Smith just edged this one over four rounds and caught the eye with his right hand leads. Borg worked well throughout but suffered an injury to his nose in the second round.

In the 77kg Challenge belt bout, Southall's Ibrahim Seam overcame a shaky first round to win a unanimous decision over Bromley's Osheay Imhogiemme. The Bromley man came out on the front foot and switched from head to body well but Seam stepped up the pace in the second and third rounds, using his long reach to keep Imhogiemme at bay. Seam finished the fight strong to gain a unanimous points decision.

In the final special bout of the evening, in the 70kg division Honour and Glory's Gheorgita Isala went toe-to-toe with Base's Mussa Ngeya in one of the fights of the night for the Challenge belt. Ngeya was relaxed behind the jab in the opening round until Isala landed heavy right hand flurries to slow him down. In the second round, Isala took charge, swinging in with big hooks with slick work to the body in the third. The pendulum swung back and forth in the final round with both men tired; Isala came out victorious with a majority decision to secure the belt.

In the senior bouts, Joe Boxing's Danny Parker was up against it, taking on Balham's Jason Ashford at 85kg and the fight did not disappoint, the whole gym was on its feet. Both men came out, exchanging heavy hooks and uppercuts in the opener. Parker's solid left hook put Ashford on the back foot towards the end of the round. Ashford was picking his shots a lot better in the next, as more precise hooks to the head and body slowed Parker down. But the decisive action came from the referee, near the end of the round, when the home fighter was disqualified for spitting out his gum shield, handing Parker the victory.

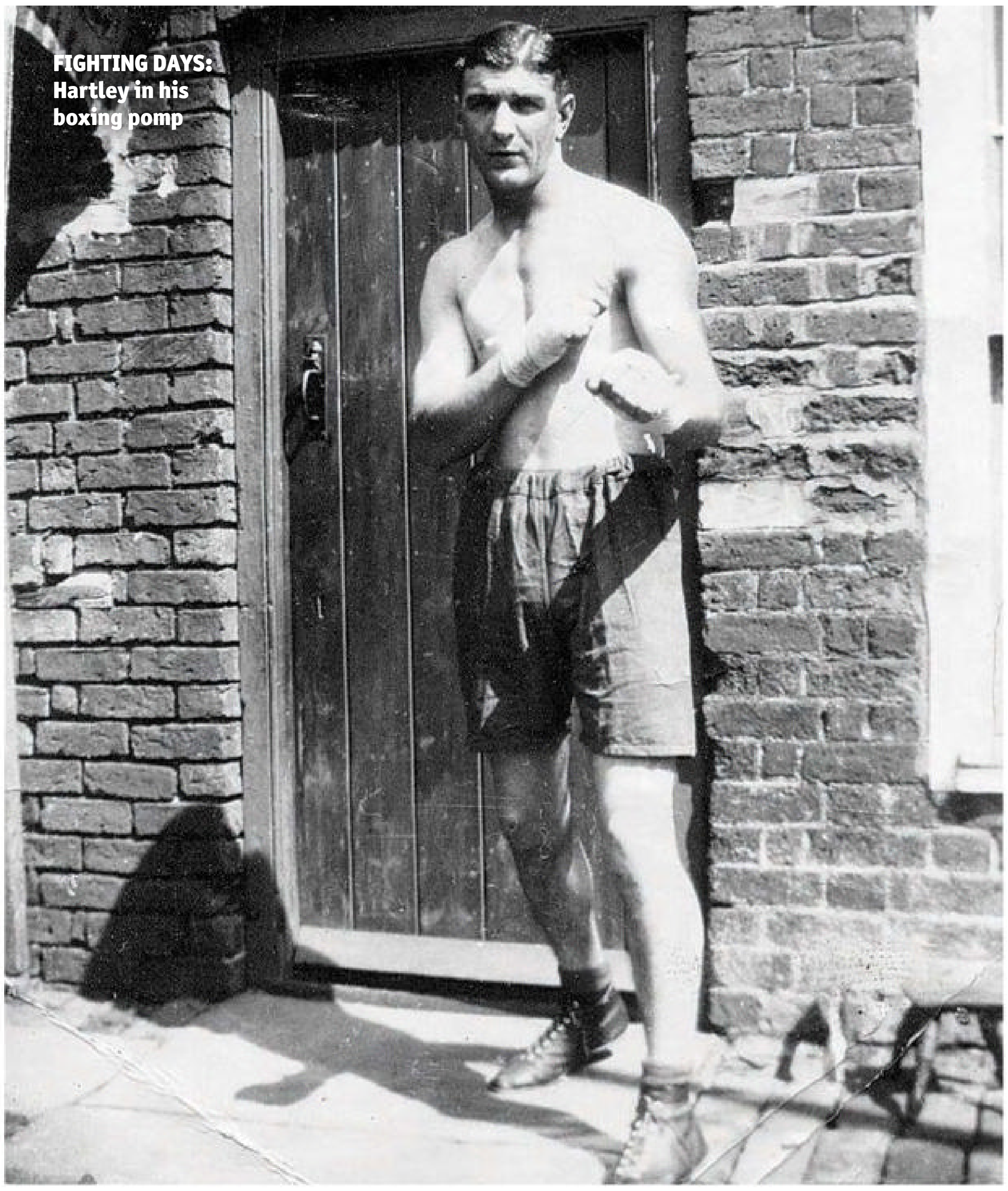
Base's Jerrica Yambuya took the fight to Honour and Glory's Bouille Maihin in the opening round of their 67kg bout, digging in some heavy body shots with great success for the smaller man. Maihin had some success with the right hand in the final round but Yambuya was the busier throughout to secure a unanimous decision.

Balham home fighter Chris Tucker had to work hard for the victory against Small Holding's Josh Wing who came out early swinging flurries of hooks, smothering his opponent's work early on. Wing secured the second round with his big right hands but Tucker managed to push the pace more in the final round and land the more effective right hands to win on a majority decision in their 85kg bout.

Two 60kg Beckenham fighters were victorious on the night, both Patrice Morrison and Charlie Warrick from the South London club secured unanimous points decisions in impressive fashion. Morrison pushed Balham's Marouf Saadat onto the back foot from the first bell and picked his shots perfectly over three rounds. Warrick used his reach well against London Military's Tye Stanislas, poking out his stiff jab and used excellent footwork to keep space between the pair, outworking him with slick straight shots to gain the unanimous points victory.

Also on the packed show, at 64kgs Small Holding's Tyler Nantwi outclassed Honour Oak's Ceyhun Halil over three rounds where he used his height and reach advantage behind straight shots for an easy unanimous points decision. Finally, at 60kgs, Southall's Aditya Toware secured a unanimous victory over Broad Street's Arco Abdur using constant pressure, while avoiding Abdur's wild flurries.

The Fantastic Mr Hartley



FIGHTING DAYS: Hartley in his boxing pomp

The story of a splendid crowd-pleaser who dedicated his life to boxing literature

Miles Templeton

Boxing historian

BACK in the 1980s there was a very popular advert on British TV for BT's Yellow Pages in which an old gentleman eventually tracks down a beloved book, "Fly Fishing by J R Hartley". Well, boxing has its own bibliophile by the name of Hartley, and he was quite an exceptional man.

I used to communicate intermittently with R A Hartley many years ago as he used to buy and sell boxing books and magazines, but he is most famous for his life's work, the *History and Bibliography of Boxing Books.* Bob attempted to write a complete compendium of every boxing book ever published, both in the UK and abroad, and he succeeded in finding, and detailing, over 2,100 of them. For anyone seriously interested in building a collection of boxing books, and there are many of you, Bob's book is an essential source of reference.

Bob always came across as quite a learned and scholarly gentleman and it came as a complete surprise to many to find that he had an extensive career as a professional boxer back in the 1930s. I have made it something of a personal mission to trace as many of Bob's bouts as I can and, with him boxing in and around one of the backwaters of boxing at this time, Lincolnshire and East Anglia, it has

---

GRUMBLES AND PRAISE

Essex EBA focus on the current scene to highlight the good and the bad

Simon Euan-Smith

simonoldtimers @googlemail.com

EBA correspondent

I'M constantly stressing the need for EBAs to show they're involved with today's scene, not simply recalling the past. The latest Punch Lines – Essex EBA's monthly newsletter – certainly does that.

The front has a picture of the Peacock Boxing Hall, with the comment "Tony Bowers and Mo Prior have brought professional boxing back to Canning Town after an absence of many years." There's a further report of the show inside, with a nod to the past, recalling other Canning Town venues (which sadly no longer exist) – and a list of dates for further promotions, up to September.

EBAs, and boxing people generally, will always support good causes. Essex⌧s March raffle raised £211.00 ⌧ which was made up to £300.00 as a donation to the victims of the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Well done, Essex.

There's mention of recent shows at York Hall, and Paris (where three British boxers appeared, and none lost) – and detailed opinions on the ongoing Tyson Fury v Oleksandr Usyk saga (Will they? Won't they?) and the recent Tommy Fury v Jake Paul encounter, which, in the view of the editorial, "has really dragged boxing down." And there's a pertinent Talking Point – "Have there ever been two lower-ranked boxers to contest a pay-per-view main event?" Important topics, and it's good to see an EBA taking such interest.

And there's a two-page spread headed "Exciting Times for Essex Amateurs," with detailed reports of recent shows and information on upcoming ones. That's all good.

Essex are staging an evening at Romford Greyhound Stadium on June 3. A three-course meal, and an evening of greyhound racing, all for £35.00 per person. Anyone interested should contact Chairman Tommy Burling.

These social events used to be quite frequent. Of course the pandemic effectively put a stop to them, but it's good to see them happening again (though we can't get complacent). Evenings at the races, darts matches, quizzes, fish 'n' chip suppers – all very enjoyable, and a great opportunity to bring along family and friends and show them what the EBA movement's about. You don't have to have boxed to be an EBA member (how often have I said this?) and if people come to a social event, enjoy it, then come to a meeting and decide to join up – great!

Tommy Burling and Essex Secretary Ray Lee have produced a series of not proved to be an easy task. A glance at his record reveals just how extensive professional boxing was at this time, with many small towns and villages that haven't had a pro show for over 80 years appearing on it.

Bob was born at Billingborough in South Lincolnshire, and he was the best of a small group of around eight other boxers who came from the village, and even today its population is only around 1,000. He boxed as a middleweight, and he could punch. His record is decorated with clean knockouts against a host of men who, like him, were boxing primarily to put food onto the family table.

With attendances at some of the halls he boxed at regularly amounting to only two or three hundred, no one was ever going to get rich from boxing around there. The first contest that I can trace for Bob took place at the Forester's Hall in his own village, a six-rounder against a lad from nearby Bourne, on a bill promoted by the Boston Boxing Syndicate and Bob knocked his man out in two rounds. He followed that up with a one-round knockout at Grantham a week later against a lad from Kirton.

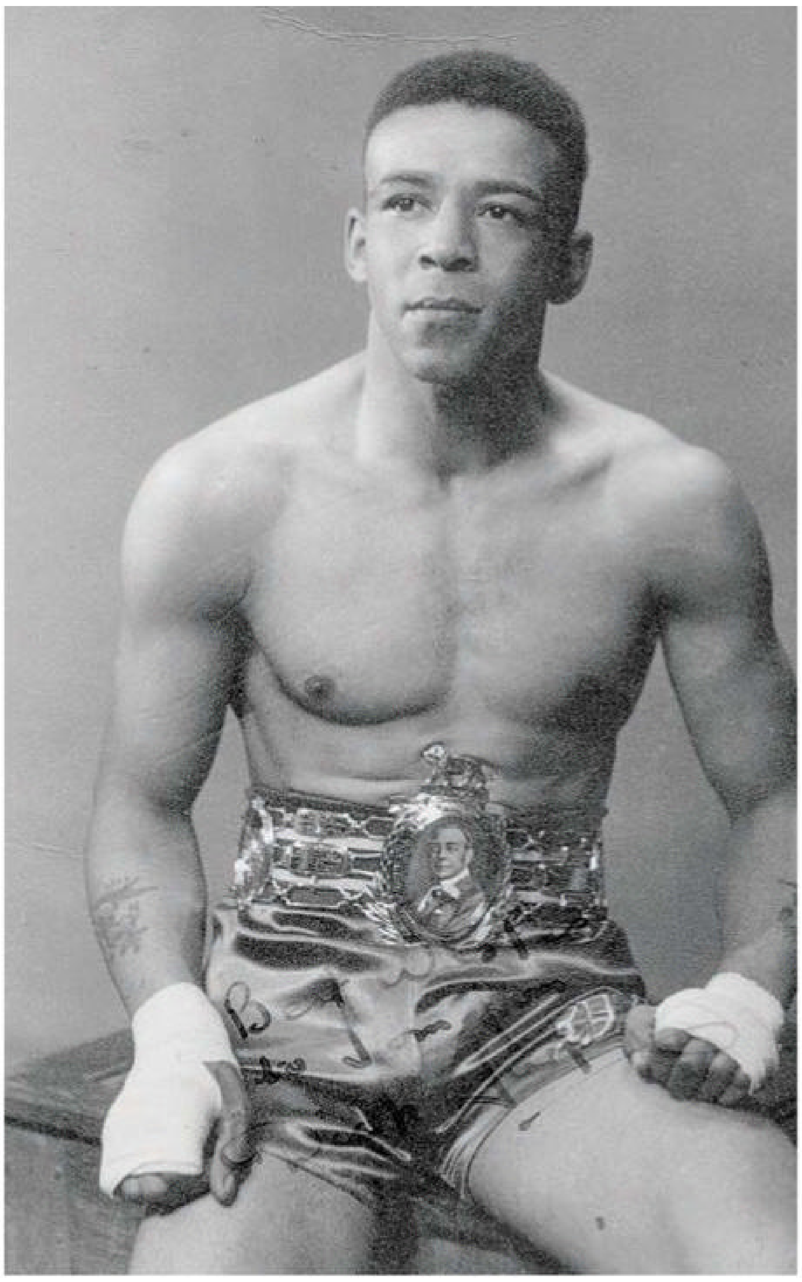
Most of Bob's early bouts took place at Boston, Grantham, Spalding and Billingborough, where he was naturally a big favourite, and he won his first 14 in a row. His first defeat came in March 1934 when he was knocked out of the ring at Grantham in a bout against Arthur 'Knocker' Freestone. Despite a valiant attempt Bob could not get back inside the ring in time. After this Bob continued to plug away in mainly eight and 10-rounders all over Lincs and East Anglia, boxing at Holbeach, Bourne, Skegness, Lincoln, Melton Mowbray and Woodhall Spa.

During 1936 he campaigned in Suffolk and Essex and then, in October 1937, he boxed at the Empress Cinema, Chatteris in a bill topped by local hero, Eric Boon, whose meteoric career was just starting to peak. This earned Bob his first, and only, London contest. He drew over eight rounds with George Thurcell at Canning Town Marina and the *BN* report for the bout tells us about Bob's fighting style "A real sizzler and a toe-to-toe slam all the way with Hartley fighting splendidly."

In his last contest Bob held the great Dick Turpin to another eight-round draw at Rugby. After a 56-bout career, with only 11 losses, Bob left the ring for the comfort of his study to produce the definitive boxing bibliography. What a man.

'A REAL SIZZLER AND A TOE-TO-TOE SLAM ALL THE WAY'

ESTEEMED COMPANY:
Dick Turpin was held to a draw by Hartley



GREAT VICTORY:
Harry Scott celebrates his victory against American boxer Rubin Carter in Kensington in 1965

excellent scrapbooks on boxers of the past, and I heartily recommend the latest two – on Welshman Robbie Regan and Liverpool's Harry Scott.

Regan boxed pro between 1989 and 1996, with just two losses in 22 bouts (three draws). He became Welsh, British and European flyweight champion: failed to wrest the WBO 112lb title from Mexican Alberto Jimenez in June 1995: then, two fights later, won that organisation's bantamweight crown via unanimous decision over Puerto Rico's Daniel Jimenez. Both bouts, like the majority of Regan's, were staged in Cardiff, and a title defence there would have been huge. But cruelly Robbie failed a brain scan, and had to retire.

The Scott book incorporates his earlier biography, Almost There, written by Harry's wife, Brenda. The title refers to the extraordinary fact that Harry took part in four official British title eliminators (winning one, a ninth-round stoppage of Carl Thomas in March 1970) - but never boxed for the title. He won the Central Area title, never lost it in the ring, and met the best middleweights in Britain, Europe and the world (sharing two memorable battles with world-ranked American Rubin Carter at the Albert Hall, losing the first on a cut and winning the return on points).

The first show I covered for BN, at Wolverhampton Civic Hall in June 1973, featured Harry against ex-ABA champion Trevor Francis. Scott dropped his man in the second round – the only time Francis was floored as a pro, I believe – but Francis rallied and gradually ground Scott down in the seventh. Harry never boxed again.

KARL SAMPSON

The journeyman who won three on the bounce last year talks to **Andrew Fairley**

When and why you started boxing:
I was 10 years old when I started training, 11 when I had my first contest. Why? More than likely due to my dad being a professional boxer and my older brother Jamie Sampson boxing at the time too. It left me no other option!

Favourite all-time fighter:
I'd have to go with Manny Pacquiao. When I was growing up he was moving through the weights and demolishing those in his way.

Best fight you've seen:
Best fight live was an amateur contest. Junior ABA quarter-final between Danny Phillips and Ronnie Heffron at Everton Leisure Centre some years back! There was two rings that day and the fight in the opposite ring only had the judges spectating!

Personal career highlight:
I'd say winning three fights on the bounce last year, all on the road as a journeyman! Not many times you see that happen.

Toughest opponent:
As it stands, I would have to say my most recent opponent, Mohammed Subhaan. Simply because he broke my nose [laughs]. No one else has done that!

Best and worst attributes as a boxer:
My weakness is that I don't like to listen to the good and right advice I get given! I seem too happy to accept a fight with nearly anyone I get offered. Biggest strength I'd say is my fitness. I'm always fit.

Training tip:
If you want to succeed in boxing it takes a lot of hard work and of course skill! But give 100 per cent every time and that way your giving yourself the best chance.

Favourite meal/restaurant:
Caribbean spice; London Road, Sheffield is the spot!

Best friends in boxing:
Everyone at Manor Boxing Academy. Especially my little brother, 'Super' Sam Sampson; he's the man.

Which other athlete would you like to be and why?
Usain Bolt! He's the best athlete we've ever seen.

Last film/TV show you saw:
Probably *Snatch*. I rewatch this film a lot, it's my all-time favourite.

Who would play you in a film of your life:
I'm saying Tom Hardy!

Have you ever been starstruck:
I met Mike Tyson when I was 15 at Elland Road. I was starstruck when he shouted me and my pal over. We had been shouting his name for a good 15 minutes before.

Last time you cried:
I cry sometimes when I visit my nanan's grave. She was special.

Best advice received:
Do what makes you happy!

Worst rumour about yourself:
None to date.

Something not many people know about you:
I love to sing *Barbie Girl* on karaoke when I'm on holiday.

FAST FACTS

Age: 28 **Twitter:** @boxerKsampson **Nationality:** English **Height:** 5′ 8″ **From:** Sheffield **Stance:** Switcher **Record:** 5-18 (1) **Division:** Lightweight **Next fight:** Sampson last fought on March 18 and heard the final bell so expect him to be back in a ring very soon.

[**NEXT ISSUE ON SALE** APRIL 5, 2023 (DIGITAL) AND APRIL 6, 2023 (PRINT)]

ESTABLISHED 1909 **BOXING NEWS** Kelsey Media, The Granary, Downs Court, Yalding Hill, Yalding, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 6AL
EMAIL firstname.surname@kelsey.co.uk **DIGITAL & PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS** https://help.kelsey.co.uk / +44 (0)1959 543 747 / www.shop.kelsey.co.uk/boxingnews
EDITOR Matt Christie **ART EDITOR & SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER** Nick Bond **ONLINE EDITOR** Elliot Worsell **SUB EDITOR** Oliver Fennell
MANAGING DIRECTOR Kevin McCormick **PUBLISHER** Oswin Grady **SUBS MANAGER** Oliver Jones **ADVERTISING** keir@360publishing.co.uk
PRINTING William Gibbons & Sons Ltd **DISTRIBUTION** Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 3rd Floor, 161 Marsh Wall, London, E14 9AP / 0330 390 6555;
Distribution in Northern Ireland and the Republic Of Ireland – Newspread +353 23 886 3850 **PUBLISHED BY** Kelsey Media 2022 © all rights reserved.
Kelsey Media is a trading name of Kelsey Publishing Ltd. Reproduction in whole or in part is forbidden except with permission in writing from the publishers.

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

On Twitter
@BoxingNewsED

Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/boxingnewsonline

Incorporating

EXCLUSIVE SUBSCRIBER BENEFITS

GET 13 ISSUES
FOR JUST £13

TEÓFIMO LÓPEZ ✦ CANELO ÁLVAREZ ✦ EUBANK JNR
BOXING NEWS
JEEZ, AZEEZ!
SHOW'S OVER
DEMETRIUS ANDRADE ★ JACK FLATLEY ★ FRAZER CLARKE ★ STEPHEN FULTON
THE DONAIRES ✦ BIN THE REMATCH? ✦ CONOR BENN
UNLAWFUL
VENGEANCE
DONALD CURRY ★ VASILIY LOMACHENKO ★ TANK DAVIS ★ DEVIN HANEY
SUNNY EDWARDS ★ PAUL BUTLER ★ LEE SELBY ★ ROCKY IV REMASTERED

ONLINE & PRINT

GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE

- ★ **SAVE UP TO £38** ON THE SHOP PRICE
- ★ **FREE DELIVERY** DIRECT TO YOUR DOOR AND YOUR DEVICE WITH A PRINT AND ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION BUNDLE
- ★ EARLY ACCESS TO PREMIUM CONTENT ONLINE AT **BOXINGNEWSONLINE.NET**
- ★ **EXCLUSIVE ACCESS** TO THE BOXING NEWS ARCHIVE

SUBSCRIBE TODAY
VISIT SHOP.KELSEY.CO.UK/BXN1323
OR CALL 01959 543747 & QUOTE CODE BXN1323
HOTLINE OPEN: MONDAY-FRIDAY, 8.30AM-5.30PM. CALLS ARE CHARGED AT YOUR STANDARD NETWORK RATE

Offer available for UK Direct Debit customers only. You will pay £13 for your first 13 issues. You will continue to pay £29.99 every 3 months. *Savings are based on the standard cover price of £4.25. Offer ends 31st December 2023. Your subscription will start with the next available issue, and you will receive 51 issues in a year. Prices are correct at the time of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions visit shop.kelsey.co.uk/terms. Data protection: We take great care in handling your personal details and these will only ever be used as set out in our privacy policy which can be viewed at shop.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-policy. You may unsubscribe at any time.

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW YOUR Stuff

176 GADGETS RATED

Stuff

GADGETS / GAMES / GEAR

LISTEN UP!

Awesome audio gear to help you get the most out of your music

BARGAIN PHONE MEGATEST

Speed, power & style without breaking the bank

PLUS!

New Apple kit inspected

Galaxy Watch4 tested

Nest Doorbell reviewed

& carbon sneakers trialled!

Boom on the move
Score in-ear gems
Treat your ears
Turn it up to eleven
Digitise your tunes
Spin some classics
Make a bigger splash
Bathe in luxury sound
Go Pro with Apple
'Siri, start the party'

170 GADGETS RATED

Stuff

GADGETS / GAMES / GEAR

NEXT-GEN HANDHELDS

Play the future of mobile gaming & Nintendo Switch OLED tested

REVIEWED: WINDOWS 11 NOTEBOOKS

Powerful laptops for every budget

PLUS!

iPhone 13 & iPad Mini tested

15 years of the Nintendo Wii

Win £1700 of Astell&Kern kit

& some super-swanky lamps

Code your own games
Crank that control
Switch it up to OLED
Play with the Boys
Travel by Steam power
AMD Ryzen shine!
Xbox on the bus

25TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

Stuff

GADGETS / GAMES / GEAR

132 INCREDIBLE XMAS GIFTS

Stacks of present ideas from budget buys to luxurious choices

NEW APPLE MACBOOK PRO RATED

Plus AirPods 3 & Watch Series 7

INSIDE!

Is Sky Glass worth it?

Google Pixel 6 Pro review

Bose's latest noise-killers

& the BBC's beige behemoth

Grab an Android bargain
Get fit after Xmas
Avoid your family
Draw on your food
Shoot 4K on the slopes
Roll the stress away
Stop losing stuff
Watch films on the wall
Time for a new hue?
Discover fresh radio
Enjoy tunes on the go
Snap & share pics

FOR THE BEST TECH ADVICE ON

- Smartphones
- Laptops
- Headphones
- Smart TV's
- Fitness Tech
- Smartwatches
- Electric Cars
- Budget Buys
- Smart Home
- Games
- Tablets & Consoles
- E-Bikes

and much more

WIN £1K OF AUDIO GEAR!

Stuff

GADGETS / GAMES / GEAR

GREATEST GADGETS OF THE YEAR!

We crown the best tech of the past 12 months in the Stuff Awards

GET FITTER FOR 2023

Winter kit for walks, runs & workouts

PLUS!

Pokemon & Sonic's latest games

Bright bike lights for dark nights

Apple TV 4K long-term test

Fitbit's Versa 4 reviewed

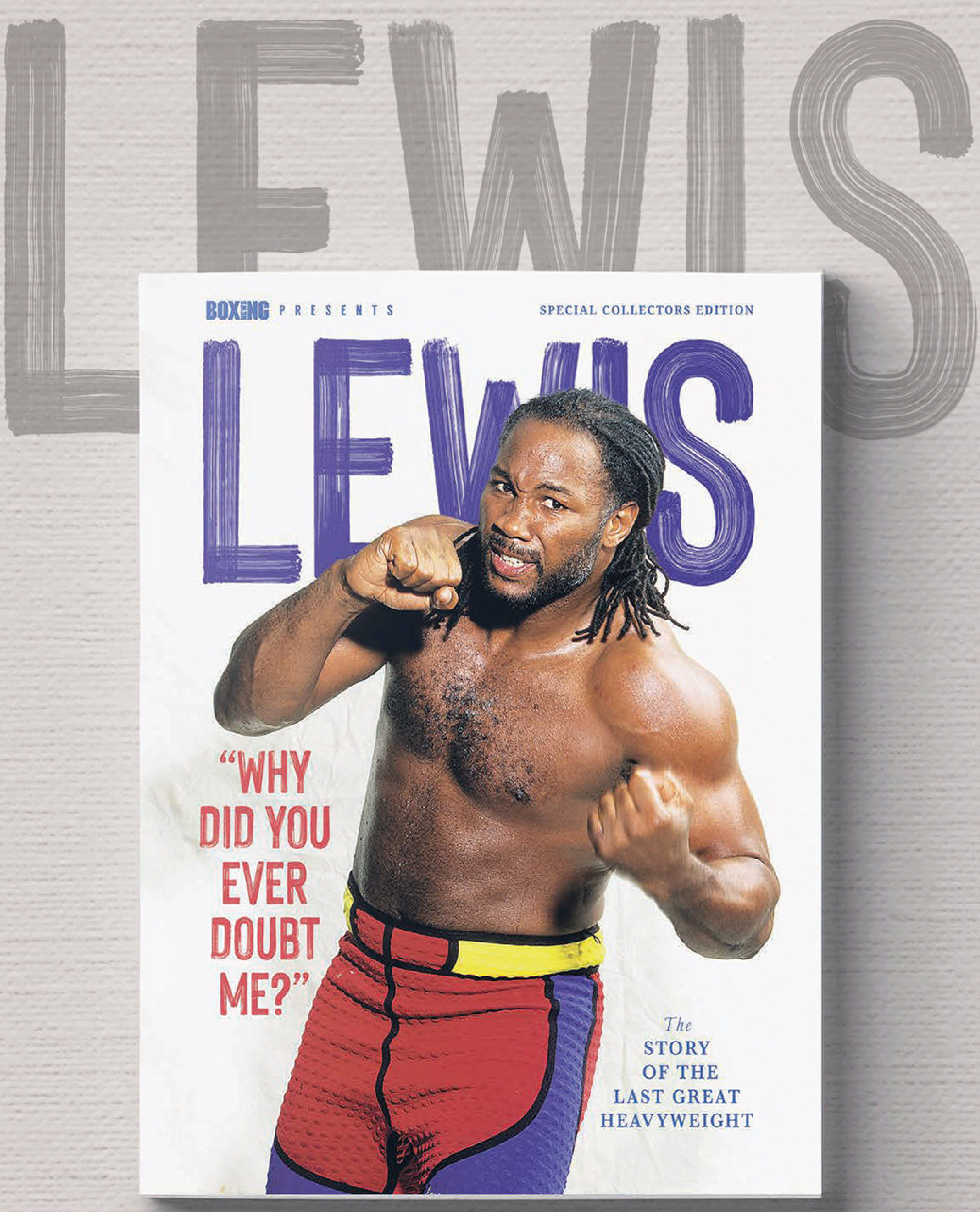
Run to the Beats
Bag an iPhone upgrade
Capture your ski hols
View delivery callers
Map out your trails
See all your faves
Light up every room
Get Sky without a dish
Game on the move
Take better snaps

LIMITED OFFER!

TRY 3 DIGITAL ISSUES FOR **JUST £5**

Visit shop.kelsey.co.uk/STU3F523

Available from shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff also on Readly, Pocketmags, Apple News+ and Zinio


LEWIS
BOXING PRESENTS
SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITION
LEWIS
"WHY DID YOU EVER DOUBT ME?"
The STORY OF THE LAST GREAT HEAVYWEIGHT

Order your copy of the brand new 100-page bookazine today for just **£9.99**

Visit: **bit.ly/lewismag**